

The Role of ICOM in Islamic Postcolonial Museology in Malaysia: A Critical Analysis and Reconstruction of a Sovereign Epistemology

Halim Ab Halim Bin Ismail

University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
machborn@yahoo.com

Ariyanti Mustapha

University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
ariyanti@um.edu.my

Rushdi Bin Ramli

University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
sufism@um.edu.my

Rahimin Affandi Abdul Rahim

Museum of Pahang, Malaysia
faqir_ila_rabbih@um.edu.my

Suggested Citation:

Ismail, Halim Ab Halim; Mustapha, Ariyanti; Ramli, Rushdi Bin; Rahim, Rahimin Affandi Abdul. (2026). *The Role of ICOM in Islamic Postcolonial Museology in Malaysia: A Critical Analysis and Reconstruction of a Sovereign Epistemology*. *Jurnal Iman dan Spiritualitas*, Volume 6, Number 3: 1011–1028. <https://doi.org/10.15575/jis.v6i3.55575>

Article's History:

Received May 2026; Revised May 2026; Accepted July 2026.
2026. journal.uinsgd.ac.id ©. All rights reserved.

Abstract:

This article examines the role of the International Council of Museums (ICOM) in the development of Islamic and postcolonial museology in Malaysia. The study adopts a qualitative approach based on document and literature analysis to investigate the relationship between global museological standards and local contexts shaped by historical, cultural, and religious dimensions. The findings indicate that although ICOM provides a fundamental framework for museum professionalism, effective heritage management requires an integrative approach that bridges the materiality of artefacts with their meanings, functions, and underlying worldviews. The experiences of institutions such as the Pahang State Museum and the Sultan Abdullah Mosque Museum demonstrate that context-based and locally grounded narratives significantly enhance public understanding of history, identity, and civilizational continuity. This study contributes to the development of an integrative museological framework that synthesizes global standards, postcolonial critique, and Islamic epistemology, thereby enabling a more holistic and contextually grounded interpretation of cultural heritage.

Keywords; ICOM; Islamic museology; postcolonial museology; cultural heritage; curatorship; Malaysia

INTRODUCTION

The development of museum institutions in the contemporary world demonstrates a significant transformation from their traditional function as repositories of artefacts to more complex roles as institutions

of meaning-making, identity construction, and social discourse. Within this framework, the International Council of Museums (ICOM) plays a pivotal role in shaping global standards through its museum definitions, codes of ethics, and professional guidelines that are widely adopted across the world (International Council of Museums (International Council of Museums (ICOM), 2018). These standards emphasize key dimensions such as collection preservation, public access, education, and social responsibility, thereby positioning museums as institutions operating within the broader framework of cultural globalization.

However, this development does not occur in a space detached from history and power structures. The emergence of modern museums is closely linked to colonial experiences, in which artefacts from non-Western regions were collected, classified, and exhibited within Western epistemological frameworks. In this process, the heritage of local societies was often interpreted through external perspectives that did not necessarily align with their original cultural and historical contexts. This condition contributed to the formation of narratives that positioned colonial powers as primary historical agents, while local communities were represented as objects of study (Andaya & Andaya, n.d.; Said, 1978).

In the Malaysian context, the establishment of museum institutions has also been influenced by this colonial legacy. Categories such as ethnographic objects and Malay culture have been used to classify local artefacts within frameworks that separate Malay society from its intellectual and political history (A. Khalim et al., 2026). Artefacts related to Islam are often treated as cultural elements rather than as integral components of a functioning system of law, knowledge, and civilization. This reflects how modern museology operates not merely as a tool of preservation, but also as a mechanism of knowledge production.

At the same time, the development of postcolonial theory has opened space for a critical reassessment of the role of museums in shaping historical narratives. Museums are no longer viewed as neutral institutions, but as sites actively involved in the production of meaning and power. This perspective resonates with the analysis of Michel Foucault, who conceptualizes knowledge as inseparable from power structures (Foucault, 1980), as well as Tony Bennett, who interprets museums as instruments of cultural governance in modern societies (Berger, 1995). Within this framework, every curatorial decision from artefact selection to exhibition design reflects particular values and perspectives.

In Islamic societies, this issue becomes more complex, as heritage is not only associated with history and culture but also with creed (*'aqīdah*), worship (*'ibādah*), and intellectual traditions. Artefacts such as Qur'anic manuscripts, legal documents, and mosque structures possess meanings that transcend their material dimensions. In such a context, museological approaches that separate objects from their meanings are insufficient to explain the position of heritage in Muslim societies. Knowledge is not detached from values; rather, it is inherently linked to moral responsibility and the principle of *tawhīd*, which demands accuracy and ethical accountability in the representation of history (Al-Attas, 1993).

Recent developments in Malaysian museums indicate efforts to adapt curatorial approaches to local contexts. Institutions such as the Pahang State Museum have demonstrated shifts in the presentation of heritage, emphasizing the history of the sultanate, legal traditions, and Malay-Islamic cultural practices. In the case of the Sultan Abdullah Mosque Museum, the transformation of a mosque space into a museum reflects the challenges of balancing heritage preservation with the sacredness of religious space. These developments suggest that museology in Malaysia is evolving towards a more contextually grounded approach (Othman et al., 2026).

Within this framework, the present study focuses on the role of the International Council of Museums (ICOM) in shaping museology in Malaysia, and examines how its framework interacts with the needs of Muslim societies and postcolonial experiences. The discussion addresses key issues such as neutrality, universalism, sacredness, representation, and authenticity in heritage management. The study adopts a document and literature analysis approach, enabling a critical evaluation of the relationship between global theory and local practice (Sindakis & Showkat, 2024).

Overall, this article conceptualizes museology as a field that mediates between global structures and local contexts. In this regard, the development of museology in Malaysia involves not only the adaptation of international standards, but also the construction of approaches that take into account the historical experiences, cultural realities, and value systems of society. This process opens space for a reconstruction of epistemology that is more aligned with local experience and the needs of contemporary Muslim communities (Adebolajo, 2022).

The discussion of museology in contemporary literature reveals a significant shift from traditional approaches toward more critical and reflexive perspectives. In its early framework, museums were primarily

understood as institutions responsible for collecting, preserving, and displaying artefacts as sources of education and research. This approach emphasized technical dimensions such as conservation, documentation, and classification of collections, which were further institutionalized through international standards developed by the International Council of Museums (International Council of Museums (ICOM), 2018). The revised museum definition introduced in 2022 expands these functions by incorporating elements of inclusivity, sustainability, and community engagement as integral components of museum practice.

However, developments in museological theory indicate that such technical approaches are insufficient to fully explain the role of museums in society. The analysis of Tony Bennett demonstrates that museums function as instruments of social formation that regulate how societies understand history and culture (Berger, 1995). Within this framework, museums do not merely transmit information but actively construct knowledge through curated representations. This perspective aligns with the ideas of Michel Foucault, who emphasizes the inseparability of knowledge and power, whereby institutions such as museums play a decisive role in determining what is accepted as truth (Foucault, 1980).

Subsequent developments in museological literature have been significantly influenced by postcolonial theory, which re-evaluates the relationship between museums and the history of colonialism. Edward Said argues that representations of the non-Western world have often been constructed through Western perspectives that center colonial authority (Said, 1978). In museum contexts, this is evident in the classification and display of artefacts from Asia, Africa, and the Middle East as exotic or ethnographic objects. Such approaches contribute to the formation of imbalanced narratives, where the voices of originating communities are marginalized.

Scholars such as (Macdonald, 2006) and (Sandell, 2007) extend this discussion by emphasizing the role of museums in promoting social justice through more inclusive forms of representation. Museums are increasingly conceptualized as spaces that enable multiple perspectives to be articulated, including those of historically marginalized communities. In recent discourse, the decolonization of museums highlights the necessity of repatriating artefacts to their communities of origin or, at minimum, involving these communities in interpretive processes (Brulon Soares & Witcomb, 2023; Hicks, 2020).

At the same time, studies on Islamic art and heritage indicate that Western museological approaches are not entirely adequate for understanding the position of artefacts within Muslim societies. Gonzalez observes that exhibitions of Islamic art in Western museums often emphasize aesthetic dimensions, such as calligraphy and architecture, while neglecting the religious, functional, and spiritual meanings embedded within these artefacts (Gonzalez, 2022). This tendency reflects a broader inclination to separate objects from their meanings, thereby limiting a comprehensive understanding of Islamic heritage as an integrated system of knowledge and practice.

In the Malaysian context, existing studies suggest that colonial legacies continue to influence museum structures and curatorial approaches. Andaya demonstrate how Malaysian history has often been framed within colonial administrative perspectives, which are subsequently reflected in museum narratives (Andaya, 2018). At the same time, local scholarship indicates ongoing efforts to reconfigure these approaches by emphasizing narratives grounded in local contexts, particularly within state museums and institutions associated with Islamic heritage.

Despite the growing body of literature that engages with museology, postcolonial theory, and Islamic studies, the relationship between these three domains has yet to be systematically developed within a unified analytical framework. Many studies tend to focus on a single dimension, either critiquing Western museology, examining postcolonial dynamics, or analyzing Islamic art without integrating these perspectives within a shared context. This fragmentation highlights a significant gap in the literature and underscores the need for a more comprehensive and integrative approach to museological analysis.

In response to this gap, the present study focuses on the intersection between ICOM frameworks, postcolonial theory, and Islamic epistemology in the development of museology in Malaysia. This approach enables a more holistic evaluation of museums as institutions operating simultaneously within global and local contexts. The emphasis on Malaysia particularly through institutional experiences such as the Pahang State Museum and the Sultan Abdullah Mosque Museum provides an empirical dimension that strengthens the theoretical discussion.

Overall, existing literature demonstrates that museology, postcolonial studies, and Islamic scholarship have each evolved into important fields for understanding the role of museums in society.

However, these domains are often discussed in isolation, without a framework that connects global standards, historical critique, and local value systems. This condition underscores the necessity of developing a more integrative approach to analyzing museology within the Malaysian context, one that bridges these domains into a coherent and systematic framework.

METHOD

This study adopts a qualitative approach grounded in document and literature analysis to examine the relationship between global museological frameworks, postcolonial theory, and Islamic epistemology within the Malaysian context. This approach is selected due to the conceptual nature of the study, which focuses on the analysis of ideas, interpretation of meanings, and the interrelationship between theoretical constructs, rather than the collection of empirical field data. Document analysis enables a systematic evaluation of both primary and secondary sources, including museum codes of ethics, institutional definitions, scholarly works, and prior studies related to museology, heritage, and Islamic thought.

The primary sources of this study include official documents issued by the International Council of Museums (ICOM), particularly the ICOM Code of Ethics for Museums (International Council of Museums (ICOM), 2018) and the revised museum definition introduced in 2022. These documents provide the foundational framework for understanding the global standards applied in museum governance and practice. In addition, key scholarly works in museology such as those by (Bennett, 1995), (Macdonald, 2006), and (Sandell, 2007) are utilized to trace the development of contemporary museological theory. Postcolonial perspectives are informed by the works of (Said, 1978), which elucidate the relationship between heritage, power, and representation.

Within the Islamic intellectual context, the study draws upon works related to Islamic epistemology and thought, particularly (Al-Attas, 1993), whose writings emphasize the inseparability of knowledge and values within the Islamic tradition. Studies on Islamic art and artefacts, such as (Gonzalez, 2022), are also incorporated to examine how Islamic heritage is interpreted within museum institutions. The integration of these sources enables a multidimensional analysis that encompasses technical, critical, and normative aspects of museology.

Data analysis is conducted through a thematic approach, whereby key issues are identified based on recurring themes within the literature. Themes such as neutrality, universalism, sacredness, figurative representation, iconoclasm, and authenticity form the basis of the analytical framework. Each theme is examined by establishing connections between global theoretical constructs, historical contexts, and the values embedded within Islamic traditions. This approach facilitates a comprehensive understanding of the interrelationship between different dimensions of museology.

In addition to literature analysis, the study incorporates contextual references to museum institutions in Malaysia, particularly the Pahang State Museum and the Sultan Abdullah Mosque Museum. These references are employed to understand how curatorial approaches are translated into practice, and how historical and heritage narratives are constructed within local contexts. Although this study does not involve direct fieldwork, the inclusion of these institutional examples provides a contextual dimension that strengthens the analytical discussion.

The methodological approach also incorporates source triangulation, whereby data derived from official documents, academic literature, and institutional contexts are compared to ensure analytical consistency and validity. This triangulation reduces reliance on a single type of source and enhances the reliability of the findings. In qualitative research, such an approach is essential to ensure that interpretations are not purely subjective, but are supported by multiple complementary sources.

Throughout the analytical process, careful attention is given to the relationship between theory and context. Global museological frameworks are used to understand professional standards and practices, while postcolonial theory provides insights into the historical and power structures that shape narrative construction. Islamic epistemology, in turn, offers a value-based perspective that emphasizes the relationship between knowledge, faith, and moral responsibility. The integration of these three dimensions enables a balanced analysis that incorporates technical, critical, and normative considerations.

Overall, the methodological approach adopted in this study allows for an examination of museology as a multidimensional field. Document and literature analysis facilitate a deep understanding of concepts and theoretical frameworks, while contextual references to local institutions bridge the discussion with practical realities. In this sense, the methodology functions not only as an analytical tool but also as an integrative framework that connects multiple dimensions within the study of museology.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Theoretical Framework: Integrating Global Museology, Postcolonial Theory, and Islamic Epistemology

The discussion of museology in the contemporary context requires a theoretical framework capable of bridging global standards, historical conditions, and local value systems. In this study, the theoretical framework is constructed through the integration of three principal dimensions: global museology shaped by the International Council of Museums (ICOM), postcolonial theory that critically examines the relationship between power and representation, and Islamic epistemology that emphasizes the interconnection between knowledge, values, and moral responsibility.

The first dimension refers to global museology, which has developed through standardized professional guidelines and institutional frameworks. ICOM provides a foundational basis for defining the functions of museums as institutions that collect, preserve, and exhibit heritage for educational and research purposes (International Council of Museums (ICOM), 2018). This approach emphasizes technical aspects such as conservation, documentation, and collection management, forming the structural backbone of modern museum operations. Within this framework, museums are conceptualized as systematic and professional institutions, guided by principles of integrity and accountability.

However, this technical dimension cannot be separated from the historical context that has shaped the evolution of museums. Postcolonial theory offers a critical perspective for understanding how heritage has been collected, interpreted, and represented within museum institutions. The work of (Said, 1978) demonstrates that knowledge about the non-Western world has often been constructed through Western perspectives linked to colonial power structures. In museum contexts, this is evident in the classification and display of artefacts according to categories that privilege external viewpoints.

This perspective is further expanded through the thought of Michel Foucault, who argues that knowledge is not neutral but is shaped by power relations that determine what is accepted as truth (Foucault, 1980). Within museums, the arrangement of galleries, the selection of artefacts, and the construction of narratives are all part of this process of knowledge production. Similarly, Tony Bennett emphasizes that museums function as institutions of cultural governance that regulate social behavior through curated representations (Bennett, 1995).

The third dimension of this framework is Islamic epistemology, which provides a value-based foundation for understanding heritage. In the Islamic intellectual tradition, knowledge is inseparable from belief (*‘aqidah*) and ethical conduct (*adab*), and is intrinsically linked to moral responsibility. Al-Attas emphasizes that knowledge in Islam serves a clear purpose: to guide humanity toward the recognition of truth and the attainment of balance in life (Al-Attas, 1993). In the context of heritage, this perspective requires that artefacts be interpreted not only in terms of their material properties, but also in relation to their meanings, functions, and positions within intellectual and civilizational traditions.

The integration of these three dimensions forms a comprehensive framework for analyzing museology. Global museology provides structural standards, postcolonial theory introduces critical awareness of history and power, and Islamic epistemology offers a normative foundation that connects knowledge with ethical responsibility (Al-Shuqairat et al., 2025). Within this framework, museums are no longer viewed as neutral institutions, but as dynamic spaces that mediate between multiple dimensions in the construction of meaning.

This framework also facilitates the systematic analysis of key issues in heritage management. Questions of neutrality relate to the relationship between values and objectivity in the presentation of knowledge. Universalism is linked to colonial histories and issues of ownership. Sacredness concerns the religious functions and spiritual meanings of artefacts (Ullah, 2025). Visual representation involves cultural and religious sensitivities, including debates on figurative imagery and iconoclasm. Authenticity relates to

the connection between objects and their original contexts within historical and intellectual traditions. These issues can be analyzed coherently through the integration of the three dimensions outlined above.

In the Malaysian context, this framework enables a nuanced understanding of how museology can be adapted to local experiences. Institutions such as the Pahang State Museum demonstrate efforts to connect heritage with the history of the sultanate, legal traditions, and Malay-Islamic culture (Abd Jalal et al., 2023). At the same time, the Sultan Abdullah Mosque Museum illustrates how sacred spaces can be interpreted within a museum framework without losing their original meanings.

Overall, this theoretical framework conceptualizes museology as an integrative field in which technical, critical, and normative dimensions are interconnected in shaping approaches to heritage. This approach does not reject global standards, but rather adapts them to local contexts by emphasizing history, culture, and religious values (Ali, 2026). In doing so, museology becomes a site of epistemological negotiation, linking global structures with local identities in the production of knowledge.

Tabel 7 Theoretical Framework

Dimension	Main Focus	Role in Museology	Analytical Implications
ICOM (Global Museology)	Standards & Professionalism	Conservation, ethics, collection management	Technical and structural foundation
Postcolonial Theory	Power & Representation	Historical interpretation, colonial critique	Historical awareness and narrative critique
Islamic Epistemology	Values & Tawḥīd	Meaning, function, ethical conduct (adab)	Normative and moral foundation

The integrated theoretical framework combining global museology, postcolonial theory, and Islamic epistemology reveals a layered relationship between structure, interpretation, and values in shaping museum practices (Duhita Drijono & Ginanjar, 2025). Each dimension maintains a distinct focus, yet they interact directly in determining how heritage is collected, interpreted, and presented to society.

The global museological dimension, shaped by the standards of the International Council of Museums, provides the technical foundation for museum management (Pluszyńska et al., 2026). Its emphasis on conservation, documentation, and professional ethics ensures the systematic preservation of heritage and institutional credibility. However, this dimension operates within a universalizing framework that may not fully account for the diversity of cultural and religious contexts. As such, technical structures require contextual adaptation to align with local realities.

The postcolonial dimension introduces critical awareness of the historical and power relations underlying museum development. Heritage analysis extends beyond material aspects to include questions of acquisition, interpretation, and narrative construction. This perspective highlights how many global museum collections are embedded within colonial histories, thereby influencing their representation. It also opens space for incorporating the perspectives of originating communities in interpretive processes (Macdonald, 2006; Sandell, 2007).

The dimension of Islamic epistemology provides a value-based foundation that connects heritage to deeper meanings. Within the Islamic tradition, artefacts are not detached from their functions and positions within broader systems of knowledge and practice. Manuscripts, mosque structures, and ritual objects are understood as components of a living intellectual and spiritual tradition. This perspective emphasizes that heritage interpretation must account for meaning, function, and ethical conduct, in addition to physical attributes (Nakoneczna & Szczepański, 2024).

The interaction between these three dimensions demonstrates that museology cannot rely on a single framework. Technical structures provided by global museology require the historical awareness introduced by postcolonial critique, while both depend on the normative grounding offered by Islamic epistemology (Badran et al., 2022). This integration enables a more balanced approach to heritage, where preservation, interpretation, and meaning are interconnected within a comprehensive analytical framework.

In curatorial practice, this interaction is reflected in how artefacts are selected and presented. Objects preserved through technical standards must be interpreted with consideration of their historical acquisition and original contexts. At the same time, narrative presentation should connect artefacts to

broader meanings within societal traditions. This approach allows museums to function not only as repositories of heritage but also as spaces for constructing deeper understandings of history and identity (Moneta et al., 2025).

In Malaysia, the integration of these dimensions is evident in institutional practices such as those of the Pahang State Museum, which seeks to present heritage within a framework connecting sultanate history, legal traditions, and Malay-Islamic culture. Similarly, the Sultan Abdullah Mosque Museum demonstrates how sacred dimensions can be integrated into museum narratives without detaching artefacts from their original meanings.

Overall, this matrix demonstrates that the development of museology requires an approach that integrates technical structures, historical awareness, and value-based foundations. Such an approach enables heritage to be preserved and communicated in a holistic manner, where objects, meanings, and contexts are understood as an interconnected whole. In this sense, museums function as institutions that bridge the past and the present through narratives that shape societal understanding and identity.

Critical Analysis of ICOM in Islamic Postcolonial Museology

The role of the International Council of Museums (ICOM) in shaping modern museology has established an essential foundation for museum professionalism through its emphasis on ethics, collection preservation, and social responsibility (International Council of Museums (ICOM), 2018). The revised museum definition introduced in 2022 further expands this role by positioning museums as inclusive spaces that promote education, community engagement, and sustainability (Gonzalez, 2022). Nevertheless, the application of this framework within Islamic societies and postcolonial contexts reveals several tensions arising from fundamental differences in how heritage is understood and interpreted.

In many Islamic epistemological frameworks, heritage (*turāth*) is not merely conceived as a static collection of material artifacts, but as a living continuum that integrates spiritual, ethical, and communal dimensions (Randy Putra Alamsyah & Daud Lintang, 2025). This perspective often contrasts with the dominant Western museological paradigm endorsed by ICOM, which tends to prioritize material conservation, classification, and institutional authority over interpretive narratives. Consequently, the universalist claims embedded within ICOM's standards may inadvertently marginalize local knowledge systems and indigenous interpretive practices, particularly in societies shaped by colonial histories.

Furthermore, in postcolonial Islamic contexts, museums are frequently entangled with historical legacies of power, where collections were acquired, categorized, and displayed through colonial lenses. This raises critical questions regarding representation, ownership, and epistemic justice. The ICOM framework, while advocating inclusivity, does not always sufficiently address the asymmetrical power relations that continue to influence curatorial decisions and narrative constructions. As a result, museums in these contexts may struggle to reconcile international standards with the need to decolonize knowledge and re-center local voices.

Another point of tension lies in the ethical dimension of display, particularly concerning sacred objects, religious artifacts, and intangible cultural expressions. Within Islamic traditions, certain objects are not intended for public exhibition due to their spiritual significance, which challenges the assumption of universal accessibility promoted by contemporary museology. This necessitates a more nuanced ethical framework that accommodates religious sensitivities while maintaining professional standards.

Therefore, a critical engagement with ICOM in Islamic postcolonial museology requires not a wholesale rejection, but a contextual adaptation. This involves reinterpreting museological principles through dialogical approaches that integrate Islamic philosophical perspectives, local cultural values, and postcolonial critiques. By doing so, museums can move toward a more pluralistic and reflexive model one that not only preserves heritage but also empowers communities as active agents in the production and transmission of meaning.

1. *Neutrality and the Principle of Tawḥīd*

In modern museology, neutrality is often regarded as a foundational principle for ensuring objective knowledge dissemination. This approach aims to prevent museums from being influenced by specific ideological positions. However, every curatorial process involves selection and interpretation that reflect

particular intellectual frameworks. Museums function as institutions that construct social meaning through cultural representation (Bennett, 1995), while the relationship between knowledge and power suggests that what is accepted as truth is shaped by broader structural forces (Foucault, 1980).

Within the Islamic framework, knowledge cannot be separated from values and moral responsibility. A tawhīdic approach requires that history and heritage be presented with integrity (*amānah*), ensuring that narratives reflect truth while remaining aligned with theological principles. In this context, neutrality is not understood as the separation of knowledge from values, but as the ethical obligation to present information truthfully and justly within a coherent moral framework (Al-Attas, 1993).

From this perspective, the notion of value-free neutrality appears epistemologically problematic, as it obscures the moral and metaphysical assumptions underlying knowledge production. A tawhīdic paradigm instead emphasizes the unity of knowledge (*waḥdat al-ʿilm*), where empirical observation, rational inquiry, and revelation are integrated within a unified ontological vision. This integration challenges the secular bifurcation between fact and value that often characterizes modern museum practices, and calls for a more holistic interpretive approach.

Moreover, the principle of tawhīd reorients the purpose of museums beyond mere preservation and display toward ethical cultivation (*tarbiyah*) and the reinforcement of collective moral consciousness (Abdalla, 2025). In this sense, exhibitions are not neutral spaces of passive observation, but active sites of meaning-making that carry pedagogical and spiritual implications. Curatorial decisions, therefore, must be guided not only by professional standards but also by considerations of ethical accountability before both society and God.

This reconceptualization also has practical implications for exhibition design and narrative construction. It encourages the inclusion of marginalized perspectives, the avoidance of reductive or desacralizing representations, and the articulation of historical experiences in ways that uphold dignity (*ʿizzah*) and justice (*ʿadl*). Consequently, neutrality is reframed as principled objectivity—an approach that remains critically aware of its own assumptions while striving to balance scholarly rigor with moral responsibility (dos Santos, 2025).

Thus, rather than abandoning the concept of neutrality altogether, an Islamic museological approach seeks to redefine it through the lens of tawhīd, transforming it into a value-conscious and ethically grounded practice. This shift not only enriches the theoretical foundations of museology but also offers a constructive pathway for engaging with contemporary debates on knowledge, representation, and institutional responsibility in pluralistic societies.

2. *The Universal Museum and Colonial Heritage*

The concept of the universal museum promotes the idea that cultural heritage belongs to humanity as a whole and can be preserved by institutions with the capacity to safeguard it. This approach is exemplified by institutions such as the British Museum, which houses collections from diverse civilizations within a global framework. However, the acquisition of many such artefacts is closely tied to colonial histories involving the transfer of objects from their places of origin to Western centers of power.

Representations of non-Western heritage are often shaped through external perspectives that reinforce colonial authority (Said, 1978). Artefacts are presented as cultural objects detached from their original contexts, thereby diminishing the interpretive role of originating communities. Contemporary decolonization discourse highlights the need to acknowledge these histories and to incorporate local perspectives into heritage interpretation (Brulon Soares & Witcomb, 2022; Hicks, 2020).

This critique problematizes the universal museum's claim to neutrality and global stewardship, revealing instead a structural asymmetry in authority over meaning, ownership, and access. While such institutions often justify their role through narratives of preservation and accessibility, these claims can obscure the historical conditions under which collections were accumulated, including coercion, unequal exchange, and cultural dispossession. As a result, the “universal” in universal museums may function less as an inclusive ideal and more as a hegemonic framework that centralizes interpretive power in the Global North (Boelhower, 2024).

In response, increasing demands for repatriation and restitution have emerged as central concerns within global museological debates. Source communities and formerly colonized nations are asserting their

rights not only to the physical return of artefacts but also to the restoration of narrative sovereignty over their cultural heritage (Nicholas, 2022). This shift challenges museums to move beyond tokenistic inclusion toward more substantive forms of collaboration, such as shared curation, community-led interpretation, and transnational partnerships grounded in equity.

From an Islamic postcolonial perspective, these issues intersect with broader ethical principles concerning justice (*'adl*), trust (*amānah*), and the rightful custodianship of cultural heritage. Artefacts are not merely aesthetic or historical objects but are embedded within lived traditions, spiritual meanings, and communal identities. Therefore, their displacement cannot be understood solely in legal or institutional terms, but must also be evaluated through moral and civilizational lenses that recognize the integrity of originating contexts (Ramesh, 2026).

Accordingly, rethinking the universal museum entails a paradigmatic shift toward what may be termed a “pluriversal” model one that acknowledges multiple centers of knowledge production and respects the epistemic agency of diverse cultures (Valle Noronha, 2025). Such a model does not necessarily reject global collaboration but reconfigures it on the basis of reciprocity, dialogue, and ethical accountability. In this way, museums can begin to address the enduring legacies of colonialism while contributing to a more just and inclusive global heritage landscape.

3. *Sacred and Secular Dimensions in Islamic Artefacts*

The modern museological separation between the sacred and the secular reveals limitations in understanding Islamic artefacts. Objects such as Qur'anic manuscripts and mosque elements possess meanings that transcend their material dimensions. Presentations that focus solely on aesthetic or historical aspects are insufficient to capture their significance within Muslim societies (Samsul Hady et al., 2025).

Studies indicate that exhibitions of Islamic art in global museums often emphasize visual features such as calligraphy, while neglecting their spiritual functions and intellectual traditions (Gonzalez, 2022). Within the Islamic tradition, artefacts must be understood as part of an integrated system of knowledge and worship, where *adab* governs both their handling and interpretation.

This dichotomy between sacred and secular is largely a product of modern Western epistemology, which tends to compartmentalize domains of knowledge and experience. In contrast, Islamic ontology does not recognize such rigid divisions, as material culture is inherently connected to metaphysical meaning and devotional practice (Tajdin, 2022). Consequently, the museological framing of Islamic artefacts as “art objects” risks desacralizing them by detaching them from their original religious and social functions.

Moreover, the exhibition of sacred objects raises important ethical questions concerning propriety, intention, and audience engagement. For instance, Qur'anic manuscripts are not merely historical documents but embodiments of divine revelation, requiring respectful treatment that aligns with religious sensibilities (Ahmed, 2026). When displayed without adequate contextualization, there is a risk of reducing them to aesthetic commodities, thereby undermining their spiritual significance and the reverence they command within Muslim communities.

A more context-sensitive approach would involve re-integrating interpretive frameworks that reflect the lived realities of Islamic practice. This includes incorporating theological narratives, ritual contexts, and scholarly traditions that inform the meaning of such artefacts (McNeill, 2022). Curatorial strategies might also consider spatial design, modes of display, and visitor interaction in ways that preserve a sense of sanctity, rather than neutrality or detachment.

In this regard, the concept of *adab* offers a valuable ethical and epistemological guideline for Islamic museology. It emphasizes not only correct behavior but also the proper ordering of knowledge and recognition of the inherent dignity of objects associated with the sacred. By foregrounding *adab*, museums can move toward a more respectful and holistic representation of Islamic heritage that bridges the gap between preservation and spiritual integrity (Alghamdi & Al-Ashwal, 2025).

Thus, addressing the sacred–secular divide requires a fundamental rethinking of museological categories, moving beyond reductive classifications toward a more integrated paradigm (Zavala-Pelayo, 2024). Such an approach enables museums to engage more authentically with Islamic artefacts, ensuring that their display does not merely inform, but also resonates with the deeper moral and spiritual frameworks from which they originate.

4. *Figurative Representation and Cultural Sensitivity*

The use of sculptures and figurative representations is common in Western museums to depict historical figures and events. While this approach enhances visual engagement, it requires careful consideration within Islamic contexts due to its association with theological principles related to *taṣwīr*. Alternative approaches such as narrative texts, authentic artefacts, and digital technologies can effectively convey historical information without relying on potentially sensitive physical representations. This demonstrates that curatorial innovation can evolve in alignment with cultural and religious values without compromising the educational function of museums (Macdonald, 2006).

From an Islamic theological perspective, concerns surrounding *taṣwīr* are not merely aesthetic but are *ḳawāʿid* with broader issues of imitation, representation, and the preservation of *tawḥīd*. While interpretations may vary across historical periods and scholarly traditions, there remains a general caution toward the production and display of figurative forms, particularly when they risk encouraging veneration or misrepresentation of human or sacred figures. This necessitates a nuanced curatorial approach that is sensitive to these theological considerations while remaining attentive to contemporary educational needs (Amalia, 2025).

In this context, museums operating within or engaging with Muslim audiences must critically evaluate the epistemological assumptions embedded in visual representation. Figurative displays, often perceived as neutral or pedagogical in Western contexts, may carry different connotations in Islamic settings (R'boul et al., 2024). Without appropriate contextualization, such representations risk alienating audiences or generating interpretive tensions that undermine the intended educational message.

Consequently, curatorial strategies should prioritize culturally responsive methodologies that respect the diversity of Islamic perspectives. This includes the use of non-figurative visual language such as geometric patterns, calligraphy, and architectural models, which have historically functioned as primary modes of artistic and intellectual expression in Islamic civilizations. Additionally, immersive storytelling, augmented reality, and interactive media can serve as effective tools to reconstruct historical narratives without resorting to potentially contentious forms (Hutson & Hutson, 2024).

Importantly, this approach does not imply a categorical rejection of all figurative representation, but rather advocates for contextual discernment and ethical reflexivity. Museums must engage with scholars, religious authorities, and local communities to determine acceptable boundaries and interpretive strategies. Such participatory frameworks enable institutions to balance professional standards with cultural legitimacy, fostering greater trust and inclusivity (Tansey & Parks, 2022).

Ultimately, the question of figurative representation in Islamic museology underscores the need for a pluralistic and dialogical model of curation. By acknowledging theological sensitivities and integrating them into exhibition design, museums can create spaces that are not only informative but also respectful and contextually grounded (Domsel, 2025). This alignment between curatorial practice and cultural values strengthens the role of museums as institutions that mediate knowledge across diverse epistemic and moral landscapes.

5. *Iconoclasm and Heritage Interpretation*

The issue of iconoclasm reflects the relationship between heritage preservation and religious principles. In Islamic history, the destruction of idols is associated with the purification of faith from polytheistic elements. However, within museum contexts, artefacts linked to past belief systems can be preserved as historical evidence, provided they are interpreted within appropriate educational frameworks. This approach enables heritage to function as a source of historical understanding without legitimizing contradictory beliefs. Analyses of global cases such as the destruction of the Bamiyan Buddhas highlight the complex political and ideological factors influencing such actions (Flood, 2002).

From a critical perspective, iconoclasm should not be reduced to a purely theological act, but understood within its broader socio-political and historical contexts (Mažeikis, 2025). Acts of destruction are often intertwined with questions of authority, identity formation, and contestation over public space. In this sense, iconoclasm can function both as a form of religious expression and as a symbolic assertion of power, particularly in periods of political instability or regime change.

Within Islamic intellectual history, it is important to distinguish between normative theological principles and their historical manifestations (Abdelnour, 2023). While the rejection of idolatry constitutes a core element of *tawhīd*, the treatment of material remnants associated with past civilizations has varied across time and place. Many classical Muslim societies preserved pre-Islamic artefacts as part of scholarly inquiry, historiography, and the documentation of human civilizations, indicating a more complex engagement with material heritage than is often assumed.

In contemporary museological practice, this distinction becomes particularly relevant. Museums are not spaces of worship but of interpretation, where objects are recontextualized within educational and historical narratives. Therefore, the presence of artefacts associated with non-Islamic or pre-Islamic belief systems does not inherently contradict Islamic principles, provided that their display is framed in a way that emphasizes critical understanding rather than reverence or endorsement.

At the same time, the ethical responsibility of museums extends to how such objects are contextualized and communicated to diverse audiences. Interpretive strategies should avoid sensationalism or decontextualization, and instead provide balanced narratives that acknowledge both the historical significance of the artefacts and the sensitivities of contemporary communities (Sood et al., 2026). This includes recognizing the potential for multiple readings and fostering dialogical engagement rather than imposing singular interpretations.

Thus, the challenge lies in developing a museological framework that can accommodate the tension between preservation and belief. By integrating historical consciousness with ethical sensitivity, museums can transform contested objects into sites of learning that illuminate the complexities of human civilization, religious transformation, and cultural continuity (Giannini & Bowen, 2023). In doing so, they contribute not only to the preservation of heritage but also to the cultivation of critical and reflective public discourse.

6. *Authenticity: Materiality and Meaning*

The concept of authenticity in Western museology emphasizes the physical originality of objects, including their material composition and age. However, within the Islamic framework, authenticity also encompasses meaning, function, and the continuity of intellectual traditions. Manuscripts and historical documents are evaluated not only based on their physical attributes but also on their content and role within society. This perspective highlights that heritage must be understood as an integration of object and context, where meaning plays an equally important role in interpretation (Grabar, 1987).

This expanded notion of authenticity challenges the material-centered paradigm dominant in conventional conservation practices. In many cases, the preservation of form without the preservation of meaning results in a fragmented understanding of heritage, where objects are detached from the epistemic and cultural systems that originally gave them significance (Hutson, 2024). Within Islamic intellectual tradition, authenticity is closely tied to *isnād* (chains of transmission) and the integrity of knowledge, indicating that the value of an artefact cannot be fully assessed without considering its relational and intellectual lineage.

Moreover, the emphasis on meaning foregrounds the role of function and use in determining authenticity. A manuscript, for instance, derives its authenticity not solely from its age or physical condition, but from its continued relevance within scholarly, educational, or devotional practices. This perspective aligns with a dynamic understanding of heritage, where continuity and transmission are central, rather than static preservation alone (Flannery et al., 2022).

In museological terms, this necessitates a shift from object-based authenticity toward what may be termed “contextual authenticity.” Curatorial practices must therefore incorporate interpretive frameworks that articulate the social, intellectual, and spiritual dimensions of artefacts (West, 2019). This includes providing access to the texts, traditions, and practices associated with objects, rather than limiting interpretation to visual or material analysis.

Additionally, this approach has implications for conservation ethics. Interventions aimed at preserving material integrity must be balanced with efforts to maintain or revive the functional and symbolic roles of artefacts within their respective communities (Giombini, 2022). In some cases, this may involve facilitating controlled use, reproduction, or digital dissemination as part of broader strategies for sustaining living traditions.

Thus, rethinking authenticity within Islamic museology invites a more holistic paradigm that bridges material preservation with epistemic continuity. By recognizing that meaning, function, and transmission are integral components of authenticity, museums can develop more nuanced and culturally grounded approaches to heritage interpretation, ensuring that objects remain connected to the intellectual and moral worlds from which they originate (Abdellatif, 2026).

7. Application in the Malaysian Context

In Malaysia, context-based approaches can be observed in institutions such as the Pahang State Museum, which emphasizes narratives related to the sultanate, legal traditions, and Malay-Islamic culture. Artefacts are presented not merely as objects, but as evidence of functioning social and political systems (Heyndels, 2023).

Similarly, the Sultan Abdullah Mosque Museum demonstrates how sacred spaces can be integrated into museum frameworks without losing their original meanings. Narrative presentations that highlight the mosque's role as a center of worship and knowledge help preserve the relationship between space and its historical function (Khanzadeh, 2024).

Tabel 8 Critical Synthesis of ICOM in Islamic Postcolonial Museology

Curatorial Issue	Theoretical Framework	Practical Manifestation	Empirical Example	Curatorial Implications (Islamic/Postcolonial Context)
Neutrality	ICOM vs Tawḥīd	Objective narratives shaped by worldview	Colonial narratives in Southeast Asia	Ethical objectivity grounded in truth and amānah
Universal Museum	Postcolonial	Centralization of global collections	British Museum	Historical justice and recognition of source communities
Sacred vs Secular	Islamic Epistemology	Religious artefacts aestheticized	Qur'anic manuscripts as art objects	Emphasis on adab, function, and spirituality
Figurative Representation	Fiqh (taṣwīr)	Use of statues and dioramas	Historical museum dioramas	Non-figurative alternatives and digital methods
Iconoclasm	Theology & History	Destruction vs preservation	Bamiyan case	Educational interpretation of contested artefacts
Authenticity	Western vs Islamic	Material vs meaning	Legal and fiqh manuscripts	Epistemic authenticity (meaning, function, transmission)
Local Narratives	Postcolonial + Islamic	Reframing local histories	Pahang State Museum	Sultanate-based and identity-centered narratives
Sacred Space	Islamic Museology	Transformation of religious space	Sultan Abdullah Mosque Museum	Sacred museum model based on adab and original function

This table demonstrates that each curatorial issue in museology does not exist in isolation, but emerges from the interaction of multiple theoretical frameworks. Within the dimension of neutrality, professional standards developed by the International Council of Museums emphasize objectivity, yet in practice, narratives are always shaped by underlying worldviews. The relationship between knowledge and power explains that what is presented as neutral is the result of processes of selection and interpretation (Berger, 1995; Foucault, 1980). In the Islamic context, this is reframed through the concept of amānah, where historical representation must align with the principle of tawḥīd (Al-Attas, 1993).

The issue of the universal museum highlights the persistence of colonial structures in heritage management. The centralization of collections in Western institutions often disconnects artefacts from their

original contexts. Postcolonial analysis reveals that such representations reflect unequal power relations (Hicks, 2020; Said, 1978). Consequently, the reinterpretation or repatriation of heritage becomes essential for achieving historical justice.

The sacred secular divide illustrates that many Islamic artefacts cannot be reduced to cultural objects alone. Qur'anic manuscripts, for example, function as divine revelation and guidance, not merely as artistic works. Separating materiality from meaning results in a diminished understanding of Islamic heritage (Gonzalez, 2022). A value-based approach that emphasizes adab and function allows for a more holistic interpretation.

The issue of figurative representation reflects fundamental differences between Western and Islamic visual traditions. While statues enhance visual comprehension in Western contexts, Islamic principles require careful consideration of *taṣwīr*. Digital technologies offer viable alternatives that align with religious sensitivities while maintaining educational effectiveness (Ramona & Cholimah, 2025).

Iconoclasm highlights the need for a balanced approach between preservation and theological principles. Artefacts associated with past beliefs can be preserved as historical evidence, provided their interpretation reflects societal transformation. This enables museums to function as educational spaces without endorsing conflicting beliefs (Flood, 2002).

The concept of authenticity further illustrates the divergence between Western and Islamic perspectives. While Western museology emphasizes material originality, Islamic tradition incorporates meaning, function, and intellectual continuity. Manuscripts and documents are understood as part of a living knowledge system rather than isolated objects (Grabar, 1987).

In Malaysia, the integration of these dimensions is evident in institutional practices such as the Pahang State Museum, which constructs narratives based on sultanate history and Malay-Islamic traditions. Similarly, the Sultan Abdullah Mosque Museum demonstrates how sacred spaces can be interpreted within museum frameworks without losing their original significance (Fekry et al., 2023).

Overall, this tabel demonstrates that the development of museology within Islamic and postcolonial contexts requires an integrative approach that connects global standards, historical awareness, and value-based frameworks. Such an approach enables heritage to be preserved and interpreted in a holistic manner, where objects, meanings, and contexts complement one another in shaping societal understanding (Mazzocchi, 2022).

Implications for Global Museological Theory and Malaysian Museum Policy

The development of contemporary museology demonstrates that museum institutions function as spaces that shape public understanding of history, culture, and identity. Standards established by the International Council of Museums (ICOM) provide an essential foundation for museum professionalism, particularly in areas such as ethics, conservation, and collection management (International Council of Museums (ICOM), 2018). However, the application of these standards across diverse societies highlights the need to adapt such frameworks to local historical, cultural, and religious contexts.

Within global museological theory, the emphasis on neutrality and objectivity is often regarded as the basis for legitimate knowledge production. Yet, the structure of knowledge embedded within museum institutions reveals that all narratives are shaped by processes of selection and interpretation. Museums operate as mediating platforms that construct social meaning through cultural representation, where the arrangement of artefacts and narratives determines how societies understand history. This aligns with the view that knowledge is closely linked to power structures that influence what is accepted as truth (Berger, 1995; Foucault, 1980). In this context, a value-based approach highlights that the presentation of heritage must incorporate moral responsibility in shaping public understanding.

The evolution of postcolonial discourse further demonstrates that heritage management cannot be separated from the history of acquisition and the relationship between centers and peripheries. Artefacts relocated to global institutions are often presented within interpretive frameworks that privilege particular perspectives, thereby weakening their connection to originating communities. A historically sensitive approach emphasizes the importance of reconnecting artefacts with their original contexts and incorporating multiple perspectives in heritage interpretation (Hicks, 2020; Said, 1978). In this regard, museums function as spaces that mediate between preservation and historical justice.

The sacred dimension of artefact management introduces important implications for museological theory. Objects associated with worship and belief cannot be understood merely as exhibition materials, but must be recognized as part of a broader value system that shapes social life. Interpretive approaches that integrate meaning and function allow heritage to be understood more holistically, preserving the relationship between objects and lived experience (Gonzalez, 2022). This suggests that museological theory must expand to incorporate spiritual dimensions in heritage analysis.

The use of visual representation in museums further reflects the diversity of approaches shaped by cultural contexts. While statues and dioramas are widely used in Western museums, such practices require adaptation in societies with specific religious sensitivities. Alternatives such as textual narratives, authentic artefacts, and digital technologies provide effective means of communication without generating value-based conflicts. This development demonstrates that innovation in museology can emerge through contextual adaptation rather than uniform standardization (Lao, 2026).

Issues surrounding the preservation of artefacts linked to past belief systems also require a balanced approach. Artefacts may be retained as historical evidence, but their interpretation must clearly explain societal transformation and shifts in belief systems. This approach enables museums to function as educational spaces that demonstrate historical continuity without endorsing conflicting values (Flood, 2002).

The concept of authenticity similarly requires expansion beyond material considerations. Emphasis on physical originality must be complemented by an understanding of meaning and function within historical contexts. This allows heritage to be understood as part of a continuous system of knowledge, where objects and meanings interact in shaping collective identity (Grabar, 1987).

In the Malaysian context, these implications are reflected in institutional practices such as those of the Pahang State Museum, which constructs narratives based on sultanate history, legal traditions, and Malay-Islamic culture (Wiryomartono, 2023). Artefacts are presented as evidence of functioning social and political systems, thereby linking heritage to local identity.

Similarly, the Sultan Abdullah Mosque Museum demonstrates how spaces with religious significance can be managed within a museum framework without losing their original meaning. Interpretive strategies that emphasize the mosque's role as a center of worship and knowledge help preserve the relationship between space and historical function. This approach shows that functional transformation does not necessarily erase meaning, but can expand understanding of institutional roles within society (Singun, 2025).

Overall, the development of museology in both global and local contexts highlights the need for a balanced approach that integrates professional standards with societal values. Heritage management requires sensitivity to historical, cultural, and religious dimensions, while maintaining accuracy and institutional integrity. In this regard, museums function as integrative institutions that connect multiple dimensions in the construction of meaning, playing a crucial role in shaping public understanding of history and identity (Lee, 2026).

CONCLUSION

The development of museology within the global context demonstrates that museums function as institutions that shape understandings of history, identity, and societal values. Standards established by the International Council of Museums (ICOM) provide a critical foundation for professionalism in heritage management, particularly in areas such as ethics, conservation, and access to collections. However, the application of these frameworks within Islamic societies and postcolonial contexts reveals the need for approaches that are more responsive to historical experiences, cultural realities, and value systems.

Heritage cannot be understood solely as material objects, but must be recognized as entities that embody meaning, function, and continuity of tradition. Approaches that integrate physical and conceptual dimensions enable artefacts to be interpreted as part of broader social and intellectual systems. In this context, narrative construction plays a crucial role in ensuring that heritage is understood holistically, preserving the relationships between objects, history, and values.

The experiences of institutions such as the Pahang State Museum and the Sultan Abdullah Mosque Museum demonstrate that context-based curatorial approaches can produce more meaningful narratives. Emphasis on sultanate history, legal traditions, and intellectual heritage allows heritage to be understood as

part of functioning social and political systems. At the same time, the management of sacred spaces illustrates that original meanings can be preserved through appropriate interpretive strategies.

The overall discussion highlights that museology requires an integrative approach that connects technical structures, historical awareness, and value-based foundations. The integration of global standards, postcolonial perspectives, and Islamic epistemology enables the development of a more balanced museological framework. This approach does not reject international frameworks, but adapts them to local contexts through an emphasis on history, culture, and religion.

The main contribution of this study lies in the construction of an integrative approach to understanding museology, in which heritage is analyzed as a synthesis of object, meaning, and context. This approach provides a foundation for the development of a more sovereign museological model one that is capable of operating within global frameworks without compromising local identity. In this sense, museums function not only as institutions for preserving heritage, but also as spaces that shape public understanding of history and the values that underpin societal life.

REFERENCES

- A. Khalim, N. H., Lee, H. C., & Phipps, M. E. (2026). *Phylogeny of Cultural Heritage in Southeast Asia: A Computational Analysis of Artefact Evolution* (pp. 337–360). https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-032-13164-5_22
- Abd Jalal, A. F., Abdul Rahim, R. A., Alias, A. W., & Maimunah, S. (2023). Intipati Islamisasi Galeri Dan Muzium Di Pahang: Satu Tinjauan Eksplorasi. *Jurnal PERADABAN*, 16(1), 1–25. <https://doi.org/10.22452/PERADABAN.vol16no1.1>
- Abdalla, M. (2025). Exploring Tarbiyah in Islamic Education: A Critical Review of the English- and Arabic-Language Literature. *Education Sciences*, 15(5), 559. <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci15050559>
- Abdellatif, M. M. (2026). Foreign tour guides as mediators of Emirati heritage: interpretation, identity, and authenticity in cultural tourism. *Built Heritage*, 10(1), 26. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s43238-026-00266-8>
- Abdelnour, M. G. (2023). The Qurʾān and the Future of Islamic Analytic Theology. *Religions*, 14(4), 556. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel14040556>
- Adebolajo, J. (2022). Reading an Islamic epistemology into research: Muslim converts and contemporary religion in Britain. *Journal of Religious Education*, 70(3), 397–411. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40839-022-00183-9>
- Ahmed, Y. (2026). Developing Tadabbur (Qurʾanic Contemplation): A Philosophy of Spiritual and Moral Pedagogy. In *Handbook of Islamic Philosophy* (pp. 735–766). Springer Nature Singapore. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-95-4666-4_33
- Al-Attas, S. M. N. (1993). *Islam and Secularism*.
- Al-Shuqairat, H. R., Al-Maani, A.-A. R. M., & Aldajah, M. N. (2025). Islamic Historiography and Modernity: A Systematic Literature Review on the Evolution of Muslim Societies in the Postcolonial Era. *Journal of Islamic Thought and Civilization*, 15(1), 240–260. <https://doi.org/10.32350/jitc.151.14>
- Alghamdi, N. A., & Al-Ashwal, N. T. (2025). Reviving Architectural Ornaments in Makkah: Unveiling Their Symbolic, Cultural, and Spiritual Significance for Sustainable Heritage Preservation. *Buildings*, 15(10), 1681. <https://doi.org/10.3390/buildings15101681>
- Ali, R. (2026). 'We are still British or American colony, we are still a colony, we are not free': language ideologies, policies in education in Pakistan. *Current Issues in Language Planning*, 27(1), 67–90. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14664208.2024.2447972>
- Amalia, E. R. (2025). Leveraging Religious Capital: Teacher Agency and Curriculum Reform in Indonesian Islamic Schools. *Tafkir: Interdisciplinary Journal of Islamic Education*, 6(4), 946–965. <https://doi.org/10.31538/tijie.v6i4.2214>
- Andaya, B. W. (2018). Nation-States, Citizenship, Globalization and Regionalism: Enduring Themes in Southeast Asian Studies. *SOJOURN: Journal of Social Issues in Southeast Asia*, 33(S), ix–xxxv. <https://doi.org/10.1355/ae26-2h>

- Andaya, B. W., & Andaya, L. Y. (n.d.). *A History of Malaysia* (3rd ed.). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Badran, A., Abu-Khafajah, S., & Elliott, S. (Eds.). (2022). *Community Heritage in the Arab Region*. Springer International Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-07446-2>
- Bennett, T. (1995). *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics*. Routledge.
- Berger, B. M. (1995). *An essay on culture: Symbolic structure and social structure*. Univ of California Press.
- Boelhower, W. (2024). Decolonization, diversity and accountability: The role of museums in democracies of the global north. *Atlantic Studies*, 21(1), 14–29. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14788810.2023.2235194>
- Brulon Soares, B., & Witcomb, A. (2022). Towards Decolonisation. *Museum International*, 74(3–4), iv–xi. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13500775.2022.2234187>
- Brulon Soares, B., & Witcomb, A. (2023). Towards Decolonisation: A Critical Reflection on Museum Theory and Practice. *Museum International*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13500775.2022.2234187>
- Domsel, M. M. (2025). From Conversion to Conversation: Rethinking Christian Mission Through Comparative Theology and the Praxis of the Steyler Missionaries (Societas Verbi Divini). *Religions*, 16(11), 1420. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel16111420>
- dos Santos, A. (2025). *Reflexive Research in Music Therapy*. Springer Nature Switzerland. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-032-02033-8>
- Duhita Drijono, S., & Ginanjar, A. (2025). Decolonisation. In *The Routledge Handbook of Museum and Heritage Education* (pp. 73–98). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003462088-8>
- Fekry, M., Mohamed, M. A. A., Visvizi, A., Ibrahim, A., & Ghamri, L. F. (Eds.). (2023). *Mosque Architecture: A Transdisciplinary Debate*. Springer International Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-24751-4>
- Flannery, W., Ounanian, K., Toonen, H., van Tatenhove, J., Murtagh, B., Ferguson, L., Delaney, A., Kenter, J., Azzopardi, E., Pita, C., Mylona, D., Witteveen, L., Hansen, C. J., Howells, M., Macias, J. V., Lamers, M., Sousa, L., da Silva, A. M. F., Taylor, S., ... Saimre, T. (2022). Steering resilience in coastal and marine cultural heritage. *Maritime Studies*, 21(4), 437–446. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40152-022-00265-2>
- Flood, F. B. (2002). Between Cult and Culture: Bamiyan, Islamic Iconoclasm, and the Museum. *The Art Bulletin*, 84(4), 641–659. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00043079.2002.10787045>
- Foucault, M. (1980). *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*. Pantheon Books.
- Giannini, T., & Bowen, J. (2023). Global Cultural Conflict and Digital Identity: Transforming Museums. *Heritage*, 6(2), 1986–2005. <https://doi.org/10.3390/heritage6020107>
- Giombini, L. (2022). Respect in Conservation Ethics: A Philosophical Inquiry. *Studies in Conservation*, 67(1–2), 100–108. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00393630.2021.1940797>
- Gonzalez, V. (2022). The Religious Plot in Museums. *Religions*, 13(4), 281. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel13040281>
- Grabar, O. (1987). *The Formation of Islamic Art*. Yale University Press.
- Heyndels, S. (2023). Technology and Neutrality. *Philosophy & Technology*, 36(4), 75. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13347-023-00672-1>
- Hicks, D. (2020). *The Brutish Museums: The Benin Bronzes, Colonial Violence and Cultural Restitution*. Pluto Press.
- Hutson, J. (2024). *Digital Cultural Heritage Preservation* (pp. 99–141). https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-66320-8_4
- Hutson, J., & Hutson, P. (2024). Immersive Technologies. In *Inclusive Smart Museums* (pp. 153–228). Springer Nature Switzerland. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-43615-4_5
- International Council of Museums (ICOM). (2018). *Standing Committee for Museum Definition, Prospects and Potentials*. <https://icom.museum/en/>
- Khanzadeh, M. (2024). Aesthetic and functional analysis of mosque entrance areas in Ottoman and Safavid Empires: a comparative study. *Cogent Arts & Humanities*, 11(1). <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311983.2024.2313262>
- Lao, T. W. (2026). Beyond universal templates: the Three Ethical Indicators (3EIR) and the art of contextual conservation. *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 1–25. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13527258.2026.2673354>
- Lee, P.-C. (2026). Place-Making in Public Libraries: Integrating Local History, Information, and Learning. *Public*

- Library Quarterly*, 45(4), 439–463. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01616846.2025.2492907>
- Macdonald, S. (2006). *A Companion to Museum Studies*. Wiley-Blackwell.
- Mažeikis, G. (2025). Iconology and Critical Theory. In *Critical Theory and Symbolic Thinking* (pp. 53–97). Springer Nature Switzerland. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-91413-3_3
- Mazzocchi, F. (2022). Diving Deeper into the Concept of 'Cultural Heritage' and Its Relationship with Epistemic Diversity. *Social Epistemology*, 36(3), 393–406. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02691728.2021.2023682>
- McNeill, E. (2022). Exploring global religious traditions through artifactual literacy projects. *English Teaching: Practice & Critique*, 21(3), 295–306. <https://doi.org/10.1108/ETPC-08-2021-0109>
- Moneta, A., Hodgson, N., & Fearon, E. (2025). Re-interpreting intangible cultural heritage through immersive live performances to enhance memory-based institutions and foster community engagement. *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 31(5), 640–661. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13527258.2025.2478612>
- Nakonieczna, E., & Szczepański, J. (2024). Authenticity of cultural heritage vis-à-vis heritage reproducibility and intangibility: from conservation philosophy to practice. *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, 30(2), 220–237. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10286632.2023.2177642>
- Nicholas, G. (2022). Protecting Indigenous heritage objects, places, and values: challenges, responses, and responsibilities. *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 28(3), 400–422. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13527258.2021.2009539>
- Othman, M. K., Likong, J., & Aman, S. (2026). Leisure experience beyond individual: A novel group-centric model for visitors in living museums. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 1–27. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00222216.2026.2675276>
- Pluszyńska, A., Drabczyk, M., Gliściński, K., & Kościelna, A. (2026). Human factor in European museums' intellectual property management through sociocultural, legal, political and economic determinants. *Museum Management and Curatorship*, 41(3), 401–418. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09647775.2025.2539087>
- R'boul, H., Barnawi, O. Z., & Saidi, B. (2024). Islamic Ethics As Alternative Epistemology In Intercultural Education: Educators' Situated Knowledges. *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 72(2), 199–217. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00071005.2023.2254373>
- Ramesh, S. (2026). Theories on European Dominance and Indigenous Displacement. In *The Political Economy of the Indigenous Peoples of the World, Volume II* (pp. 259–312). Springer Nature Switzerland. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-032-24129-0_6
- Ramona, N., & Cholimah, N. (2025). Instructional Media in Early Moral Education: A Systematic Review on the Cultivation of Religious and Moral Values in Children Aged 4–6. *Golden Age: Jurnal Ilmiah Tumbuh Kembang Anak Usia Dini*, 10(1), 149–161. <https://doi.org/10.14421/jga.2025.101-12>
- Randy Putra Alamsyah, & Daud Lintang. (2025). Cultural Integration and Political Consciousness in Qur'anic Exegesis: A Study of the Tafsīr Al-Qur'ān Al-Karīm by Binjai's Ulama Tiga Serangkai. *Fikri : Jurnal Kajian Agama, Sosial Dan Budaya*, 10(1), 355–367. <https://doi.org/10.25217/jf.v10i1.6161>
- Said, E. (1978). *Orientalism*. Pantheon Books.
- Samsul Hady, M., Roibin, Teguh Prastyo, A., Bakar, A., Faslah, R., Malik Fajar Alam, A., Barkah, Q., Himmatin, U., Nuyulis Naeni Puspitasari, I., & Abdul Ghani, M. Z. (2025). Cultural transformation: religious moderation from manuscripts heritage to living tradition in Indonesia and Malaysia. *Cogent Education*, 12(1). <https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2025.2556891>
- Sandell, R. (2007). *Museums, Prejudice and the Reframing of Difference*. Routledge.
- Sindakis, S., & Showkat, G. (2024). The digital revolution in India: bridging the gap in rural technology adoption. *Journal of Innovation and Entrepreneurship*, 13(1), 29. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13731-024-00380-w>
- Singun, A. (2025). Unveiling the barriers to digital transformation in higher education institutions: a systematic literature review. *Discover Education*, 4(1), 37. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s44217-025-00430-9>
- Sood, D., Sharma, S., & Tiwari, A. (2026). A Global Analysis of Ethical Practices and Visitor Motivation in Sites of Death and Disaster. In *Sustainable Dark Tourism* (pp. 160–178). Routledge.

<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003655282-9>

- Tajdin, M. (2022). Understanding Islam between Theology and Anthropology: Reflections on Geertz's Islam Observed. *Religions*, 13(3), 221. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel13030221>
- Tansey, J. F., & Parks, E. S. (2022). Privileged professionalisms: Using co-cultural communication to strengthen inclusivity in professionalism education and community formation. *Ethics & Behavior*, 32(5), 431–448. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10508422.2021.1925118>
- Ullah, A. A. (2025). Empire, Colonialism, and Religious Mobility in Transnational History. *Religions*, 16(4), 403. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel16040403>
- Valle Noronha, M. (2025). From the objective to the pluriversal: reconfiguring care in museum theory. *Journal of the Institute of Conservation*, 48(3), 256–268. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19455224.2025.2561257>
- West, W. R. (2019). Cultural Interpretation in the 21st Century: Transformational Changes in Museum Practice. *Museum International*, 71(1–2), 48–59. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13500775.2019.1638028>
- Wiryomartono, B. (2023). *Historical Mosques in Indonesia and the Malay World*. Springer Nature Singapore. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-99-3806-3>
- Zavala-Pelayo, E. (2024). Historicizing Secular Subjectivities: Conceptual Erasures and Subjective Multi-Hybridizations. *Religions*, 15(8), 1010. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel15081010>



© 2026 by the authors. Submitted for possible open access publication under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY SA) license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>).