

DOCUMENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF THE DAWAT CULTURAL JOURNAL: HISTORICAL AND DISCOURSE STUDY OF RIAU MALAY CULTURE

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Abstract

This study aims to document and analyze Jurnal Kebudayaan Dawat as an intellectual archive that reflects the dynamics of Malay cultural thought in Riau during the 1990s. Using a qualitative approach and cultural discourse analysis, the research integrates Hall's (1997) theory of representation, Fairclough's (2010) critical discourse framework, and McLuhan's (1994) concept of media and culture. Data were collected through archival tracing, interviews, and digitalization of four Dawat editions (1994–1996) published by the Center for Malay Language and Cultural Studies, University of Riau. The findings reveal that Dawat functioned as a space of representation and decolonization of knowledge, highlighting three main thematic axes: Malay identity and marwah, oral tradition and literature, and intellectualism and history. The digital preservation of Dawat represents not merely a technical act but an epistemological effort to sustain Malay intellectual heritage. This study emphasizes the importance of preserving local cultural sources through scholarly, collaborative, and technology-based approaches.

Keywords: Dawat, Malay culture, cultural discourse, digital archiving, representation.

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan mendokumentasikan dan menganalisis *Jurnal Kebudayaan Dawat* sebagai arsip intelektual yang merekam dinamika pemikiran dan wacana budaya Melayu Riau pada dekade 1990-an. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dan analisis wacana kultural, penelitian ini memadukan teori representasi budaya (Hall, 1997), analisis wacana kritis (Fairclough, 2010), serta konsep media dan kebudayaan (McLuhan, 1994). Data diperoleh melalui penelusuran arsip, wawancara, dan digitalisasi empat edisi *Dawat* yang diterbitkan antara tahun 1994–1996 oleh Pusat Pengajian Bahasa dan Kebudayaan Melayu Universitas Riau. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa *Dawat* berfungsi sebagai ruang representasi dan dekolonisasi pengetahuan, menghadirkan tiga poros utama wacana: identitas dan marwah Melayu, sastra dan tradisi lisan, serta intelektualitas dan sejarah. Digitalisasi *Dawat* menjadi langkah strategis pelestarian warisan intelektual Melayu yang tidak hanya bersifat teknis, tetapi juga epistemologis. Penelitian ini menegaskan pentingnya pelestarian sumber-sumber kebudayaan lokal melalui pendekatan ilmiah, kolaboratif, dan berbasis teknologi digital.

Kata kunci: Dawat, budaya Melayu, wacana kebudayaan, digitalisasi arsip, representasi.

I. INTRODUCTION

Cultural journals and magazines in Indonesia play a strategic role in documenting the development of thought, culture, and the social dynamics of a society (McLuhan, 1994). Since the beginning of independence, cultural media have served as a space for the articulation of the nation's ideas and intellectual expression. For example, *Budaya* (first published in 1952), published by the Cultural Service of the Ministry of Education, Teaching, and Culture, served as a forum for the development of national science and arts. Then, *Budaya Jaya* (1968), published by the Jakarta Arts Council, emerged with the mission of developing literature and culture as a means of dialogue between experts and the community. In the same decade, *Horison* (1966) emerged as a literary magazine that accommodated new ideas and experiments in the fields of Indonesian literature and culture. Meanwhile, *Kalam: Jurnal Budaya*, published by the Utan Kayu Community in Jakarta, became a forum for intellectual reflection and interdisciplinary cultural dialogue in the 1990s. These four media demonstrate that the tradition of cultural publishing in Indonesia serves not only as a means of disseminating scientific and literary works, but also as a space for the production of cultural discourse and documentation of knowledge that brings together scientific, aesthetic, and social ideas within a single national intellectual ecosystem. In the context of Malay culture, the cultural journal *Dawat*, published by the Center for Malay Language and Culture Studies at the University of Riau in 1994, holds a significant place in that cultural publishing tradition. This journal was born from an academic passion to record, interpret, and develop Riau Malay culture through a scientific approach rooted in cultural research and reflection. Its articles discuss literature, history, language, and local wisdom, not only describing Malay culture but also articulating discourses on modernity, identity, and cultural education. *Dawat's* presence demonstrates the efforts of local intellectuals to bridge tradition with modern science, while affirming the existence of Malay culture amidst the currents of globalization and social transformation in the 1990s.

The publication period of *Dawat* coincided with a crucial period in Riau's social history, when the province experienced accelerated development and value changes due to modernization. In this context, *Dawat* became a forum for Malay academics and cultural figures to voice their views on local culture and identity. Through scholarly and reflective writings, this journal reflects the perspectives of Malay intellectuals on contemporary cultural issues, such as social change, moral values, and the dynamics of regional language and

literature. Analysis of Dawat is crucial for exploring how Malay cultural discourse was constructed and negotiated within the context of these social changes, and how its dominant themes transformed over time.

Unfortunately, to date, academic study and systematic documentation of Jurnal Budaya Dawat remains very limited. Many editions are difficult to find due to the lack of archival preservation and digitization efforts. Yet, in the context of Riau Malay cultural history, Dawat is a primary source documenting the intellectual struggles and cultural expressions of the Malay academic community in the pre-digital era. Limited access and a weak documentation system threaten the loss of the thought contained within it, necessitating a more adaptive, sustainable, and technologically advanced preservation strategy (Anderson, 2013). Digitization is not only a form of physical preservation but also an epistemological step to revitalize the knowledge heritage contained in Dawat's texts.

Thus, this research attempts to (1) trace and document the existence of the Dawat Cultural Journal as a primary source of Riau Malay culture; (2) analyze the cultural discourse contained therein to identify dominant themes and shifts in narrative that have occurred over time; and (3) formulate an effective documentation and digitization strategy to preserve Dawat as an important part of Malay intellectual and cultural history. Through these steps, this research is expected to make a real contribution to the preservation of cultural archives, strengthen academic literacy, and enrich the study of Malay culture in Indonesia.

II. THEORETICAL STUDIES

Cultural Representation and Identity

The concept of representation is a crucial foundation in cultural studies. According to Stuart Hall, representation is not simply a "reflection" of reality, but rather a process of constructing meaning through a system of signs (signifying practices) shaped by language, media, and culture (Hall, 1997). Hall explains that "representation is one of the central practices that produce culture." Thus, every cultural text—including cultural journals—becomes an arena for the production of meaning and identity, not simply a passive documentation vessel.

In the context of this research, Hall's concept helps explain how journals like Jurnal Budaya Dawat become a medium through which Riau Malay identity is culturally constructed, negotiated, and articulated. The themes emerging in this journal can be seen as strategies of cultural representation that connect local tradition and modernity.

Cultural Discourse Analysis and Power Relations

To understand how cultural discourse emerges and how narratives change over time (problem formulation 2), a critical discourse analysis approach is highly relevant. Norman Fairclough, in his work "Critical Discourse Analysis," asserts that discourse is related to ideology, power, and social change (Fairclough, 2010). This analysis encompasses three dimensions: text (micro-level), discourse practice (meso-level), and social practice (macro-level) (Munfarida, 2024). Using this theory, research can explore how the journal *Budaya Dawat* articulates changes in Riau Malay socio-culture, how dominant themes and narratives are formed, and how positions of power (e.g., cultural institutions, education, and modernity) contribute to shaping this discourse. This is relevant to answering the first and second research questions.

Archives, Documentation, and Digitization as Cultural Practices

The third research question requires effective documentation and digitization strategies. Studies on archives and cultural preservation demonstrate that archives are not merely repositories of documents, but also cultural practices and the politics of memory (archive practice). Recent studies emphasize that the digitization of archives is an effort of epistemic transformation—enabling access, reinterpretation, and inclusion of previously marginalized narratives (Marshall & Tortorici, 2022). Thus, archival and cultural preservation theory provides a framework for analyzing how the *Jurnal Budaya Dawat*, as an intellectual artifact, can be preserved and re-accessed, becoming part of a living cultural heritage.

Research Framework

Based on the three theoretical foundations above, the framework for this research can be formulated as follows:

1. *Jurnal Budaya Dawat* is seen as a space of cultural representation (Hall), where Riau Malay identity is constructed through cultural scholarship and critical reflection.
2. The discourse contained in the journal will be analyzed using a critical discourse analysis approach (Fairclough) to identify dominant themes, shifting narratives, and the power relations surrounding them.
3. Finally, this research will treat the journal as a cultural archive in need of documentation and digitization, so that preservation and accessibility strategies can be systematically designed in accordance with cultural archive theory.

With this framework, the research will be able to answer three problem formulations: (1) how does the cultural discourse in the Dawat Cultural Journal reflect the development of Riau Malay culture, (2) what are the dominant themes and how have the narratives changed, and (3) what is an effective documentation strategy for preserving the journal.

III. RESEARCH METHODS

This research uses a qualitative approach using cultural discourse analysis to examine the cultural representations, dominant themes, and documentation strategies of the Dawat Cultural Journal. This approach is grounded in the theory of cultural representation (Hall, 1997), critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 2010), and cultural archives (Marshall & Tortorici, 2022). All three are used to interpret Dawat as a cultural text and intellectual artifact that captures the dynamics of Riau Malay culture in the 1990s.

The primary data for this study are four collected issues of the Dawat Cultural Journal, including scholarly articles, editorials, and supporting visual elements. Data were collected through inventory, document digitization, and in-depth reading, supported by brief interviews with the journal's former administrators and a literature review of similar cultural media such as *Horison*, *Budaya Jaya*, and *Kalam: Jurnal Budaya*.

The analysis was conducted through three stages according to Fairclough's model:

1. Text analysis, to identify Malay cultural symbols and narratives;
2. Analysis of discourse practices, to understand the production process and ideology of the text;
3. Analysis of social practices, to link the reading results to the cultural context of Riau Malay in the 1990s.

Data validity was maintained through triangulation of sources and theories (Denzin, 2012), as well as cross-verification between texts, interviews, and supporting literature. The results of the analysis then served as the basis for formulating a documentation and digitization strategy for the journal as an effort to preserve Malay intellectual heritage.

IV. RESEARCH RESULTS

RESULTS

Dawat Cultural Journal Archives Search and Documentation

A search of the Dawat Cultural Journal was conducted since March 2025 to obtain physical archives that could be analyzed and digitized. Initial searches at the Riau University Library and the Unri Research and Development Institute (LPPM Unri) yielded no traces of

archives, indicating a weak preservation system for local cultural media in the pre-digital era. Interviews with Prof. Dr. Yusmar Yusuf (Editor-in-Chief) and Elmustian Rahman (Managing Editor) revealed that most of the Dawat manuscripts were held by private cultural figures.

On Prof. Yusmar's recommendation, the team explored the collection of Benny Riaw—an artist and cultural activist at the Kampar Pavilion—which still held four editions of Dawat (Issues 1–4) in good physical condition. This discovery served as an important primary source for the documentation and content analysis process.

All obtained editions were then digitized through high-resolution scanning and cataloged by year, author, and main theme. The archive is stored in PDF/JPEG format with initial metadata as the foundation for building a digital repository of Riau Malay culture. This step also addresses the need for a digital-based cultural media preservation strategy.

Thematic Findings and Cultural Discourse

A content analysis of the four editions of Dawat reveals three main themes of Malay cultural discourse:

1. Malay Identity and Dignity — affirming values, language, and customs as pillars of identity amidst globalization;
2. Oral Literature and Tradition — reviving pantun, syair, and traditional narratives through scientific and aesthetic studies;
3. Intellectuality and History — reflecting on the role of figures, institutions, and historical awareness of Riau society.

The writings in Dawat demonstrate a synthesis of academic and aesthetic styles, making it not only an information archive but also a space for intellectual reflection that marks the transition of Riau Malay culture towards modernity.

DISCUSSION

Cultural Discourse and the Development of Malay Identity

A longitudinal analysis of Editions 1–4 reveals a systematic development of discourse: from identity affirmation to cultural action, then to theoretical reflection and cultural mobilization. This finding is consistent with the understanding of cultural representation as a constructive practice (Hall, 1997) and a critical discourse approach that links texts to social practices (Fairclough, 2010).

The content of the first edition demonstrates a tendency to articulate cultural discourse that is both reflective and reactive to the social situation at the time. The 1990s were a time

when Riau began to face the strong penetration of national economic and political modernization. In this context, Dawat emerged as a "cultural pen" that recorded alternative voices from Malay intellectuals who sought the preservation of customs, language, and literature as a bulwark of values.

The emerging cultural discourse reflects the spirit of Malay identity, which aspires to be independent and modern while remaining rooted in tradition. The articles highlight the importance of the Malay language as the "spirit of culture," the role of literature as a reflection of the nation's soul, and the responsibility of academics to preserve local values amidst globalization.

In this inaugural issue of Jurnal Budaya Dawat, the editor (Yusmar Yusuf) includes an introductory essay entitled "Deus Otiusus." The essay outlines the spirit of DAWAT as a representation of cultural awareness and the politics of knowledge in the contemporary Malay context. Through a reflective and satirical style, this text presents DAWAT not merely as a cultural journal, but as a counter-discourse to Western epistemic dominance and the passivity of the colonized. The author identifies a situation where Malay studies are largely conducted by "outsiders who do not have a background as supporters of Malay culture," such as those from "the Netherlands (Leiden)... England (SOAS)... Scandinavian countries... Czechoslovakia... [and] increasingly narrow-minded Singapore." (Yusuf, Yusmar, 1994: 1). This quote reveals the power relations in knowledge production—that Malay is studied, but rarely speaks for itself.

In response, DAWAT proposes a new cultural position based on local self-awareness and creativity. The use of the symbol "Deus Otiusus"—a god who remains unemployed after creating—serves as a metaphor for a critique of cultural stagnation: "Humans do not know the word nggur... it symbolizes stupidity, narrow-mindedness, pettiness, social waste, and cultural waste." (Yusuf, Yusmar, 1994: 1). Thus, the "unemployed god" represents the modern Malay subject who has lost his creative energy due to being complacent as a consumer of external discourse. This critique aligns with postcolonial discourse theory—where the colonized subject is trapped within colonial knowledge structures and loses his or her own cultural agency.

The birth of DAWAT in the following section is interpreted as an attempt to reclaim the authority of that discourse. The metaphor of the birth of "the first baby named DAWAT" symbolizes the birth of a new consciousness: "This name is very simple, without burden, but

it will have consequences.” The author then connects the meaning of "dawat" to ink that is only valuable if used to write good things—"If it (DAWAT or ink) is wrapped in a quality pen tube... it will produce beautiful writing, drawings, or sketches." Conversely, ink that is allowed to spill will "dirty our clothes, hands, fingers, and money."

In cultural discourse, this text affirms DAWAT as a project for decolonizing knowledge: shifting the position of the Malay from object of study to subject of writing. It calls for the formation of a creative ethos born of local awareness, not external imitation. Its closing sentence explicitly affirms this: "DAWAT, a simple word, yet full of will." Thus, DAWAT emerges as an articulation of symbolic resistance to the hegemony of colonial knowledge, as well as a manifesto for the rise of Malay intellectuals who write, research, and interpret the world from the perspective of their own culture.

Subsequent editions record this shift in discursive practices. The second edition of Dawat (1995) shows an important shift in discourse orientation compared to the first edition in 1994. If the first edition emphasized more on the formation of identity awareness and reflection on the meaning of "Malay", then the second edition appears more analytical and applicable, highlighting the relationship between culture, modernity, and the social challenges faced by Riau society.

The articles in this edition emphasize that Malay culture is not merely a symbol of tradition, but a tool for thinking and acting in the face of changing times. For example, several articles begin to link cultural issues to regional development, education, and the mass media. This demonstrates Dawat's increasing awareness of the role of culture as the basis for development strategies based on local values.

Ideologically, Dawat in this edition moves from a "discourse of identity" to a "discourse of cultural action." This demonstrates a logical development in the dynamics of Riau Malay intellectuals, who are beginning to position themselves not only as inheritors but also as critical subjects of modernization.

The third edition, meanwhile, demonstrates Dawat's growing maturity as a journal of Malay intellectual culture. Overall, there is a shift from a normative approach toward scientific study and critical reflection on Riau's socio-cultural conditions.

The articles in this edition display a stronger historical awareness—namely, that Malay culture cannot be maintained solely through nostalgia but must be read contextually within

the context of social, political, and economic changes. Thus, Dawat begins to articulate culture as a discourse of power and identity, not simply a symbol of politeness and custom.

One of the prominent features of this edition is its tendency to link culture to national and global discourses. The authors begin by discussing Riau's position within Indonesian culture, the role of higher education institutions in producing Malay intellectuals, and the challenges of preserving cultural values amidst the expansion of capitalism and communication technology. In this way, Dawat serves as a mirror of the intellectual transformation of Riau Malays—from local identity to a broader, dialogical regional awareness.

Meanwhile, the fourth edition of Dawat Magazine marks a phase of mature reflection and a shift in orientation from contemplation of identity to cultural mobilization. In an editorial, the editors write, "The tiny baby named 'dawat' has turned one year old," a metaphor that emphasizes historical continuity and an awareness of the magazine's intellectual growth. Dawat is portrayed as a living entity growing alongside Malay cultural awareness, not simply as a scholarly periodical.

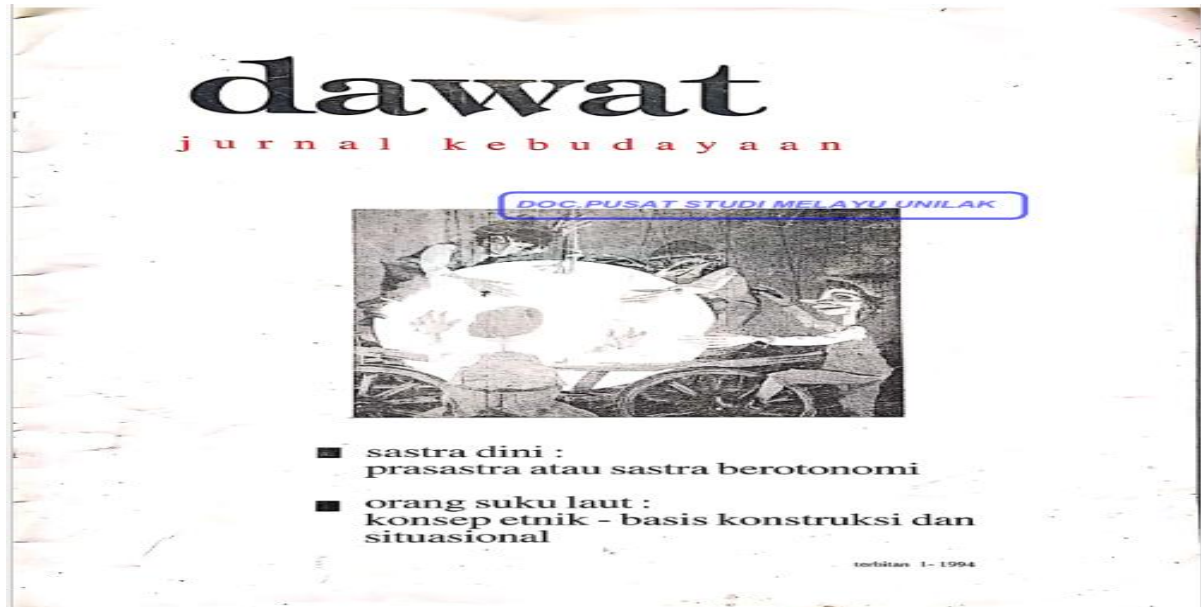
Furthermore, the statement that "the 'dawat' journal is the main spearhead for shooting the arrows of Malay cultural spirit and thought" demonstrates that the editors position Dawat not merely as a documentation medium but as a strategic tool for influencing the direction of culture. The explicit recognition of the "media as a hypodermic needle" concept demonstrates an awareness of the media's interventionist role in shaping cultural opinion and behavior. Dawat aims to penetrate the realm of cultural practice, bridging the academic world with society.

The socio-historical context of this edition is closely related to Riau's social transformation in the mid-1990s—the initial period of intensified modernization and economic globalization. In this context, the Dawat editorial team developed an ideological strategy of decolonizing knowledge. This means that Riau Malay culture must be interpreted by Malays themselves, not by outside observers who often position Malays as objects of study. In this way, Dawat functions as a project of knowledge autonomy—a medium that seeks to restore local cultural authority within the academic and public spheres.

Theoretically, this pattern reflects how cultural identity is constructed and negotiated between actors (authors, editors, readers, institutions), as well as how the journal text interacts with the socio-historical context of Riau in the 1990s—a period of modernization

that demanded the rearticulation of cultural identity. The use of editorial quotations as textual evidence strengthens the interpretive claim that Dawat pursues rhetorical and epistemic decolonial strategies.

Figure 1: Cover of the First Edition of Dawat (1994)



Dominant Themes and Shifting Narratives: Detailed Empirical Evidence

A thematic analysis of the content of Editions 1–4 concludes with three main axes (identity; literature & oral tradition; intellectuality & history), but the internal development of each axis is important to note:

1. Identity & Marwah — Consistent from Editions 1 to 4, but shifting from symbolic affirmation to practical demands (e.g., language and education advocacy). The quote from Edition 4—“We are rich in tradition, but poor in awareness”—demonstrates a shift from nostalgia to a moral agenda and the formation of collective consciousness.
2. Literature & Oral Tradition — The literature section plays a dual role: documentative (recording pantun and syair) and productive (inspiring contemporary literary practice). The essay/poetry format connects aesthetics and argumentation, allowing literary texts to function as tools for shaping discourse.
3. Intellectuality & History — Attention to the role of institutions, teachers, and language as a “language of knowledge” (e.g., Auzar Thaher: “Language is not only a structure, but also a spirit of thought”) demonstrates an effort to make Malay not merely a cultural object, but also an epistemic medium.



Figure 2: Cover of Dawat Edition 2 (1995)

The results of the thematic analysis reveal a pattern of ideological change between editions, illustrating the shift in Malay cultural position from passive locality to epistemic subject.

Aspek	Edisi 1 (1994)	Edisi 2 (1995)	Edisi 3 (1995)	Edisi 4 (1995–1996)
Orientasi Wacana	Refleksi identitas dan kesadaran diri	Aksi kebudayaan dan pembangunan	Refleksi teoretis dan kritik epistemic	Mobilisasi budaya dan dekolonisasi pengetahuan
Peran Media	Ruang kesadaran budaya	Forum advokasi nilai lokal	Wadah intelektualisme budaya	Agen perubahan dan teori budaya Melayu
Bahasa & Sastra	Tradisi lisan sebagai sumber moral	Bahasa sebagai pilar pendidikan	Bahasa sebagai sarana ilmu	Bahasa & tradisi sebagai dasar teori kebudayaan

Table 1: Thematic Analysis of Dawat Editions 1-4

Documentation, Digitization, and Epistemic Implications

The empirical findings (four editions held by a local collector) and the digitization steps taken (high-resolution scanning, metadata cataloging) confirm that physical preservation alone is not enough; digitization transforms access, reading, and use of primary sources (a procedure initiated in this research). The initial documentation of this project—PDF/JPEG format and basic metadata—provides evidence of the practical steps taken.

However, beyond the technical aspects of storage, digitization has cultural consequences: (a) accessibility opens up new readings and critiques; (b) the mediation of metadata (title, keywords, author) influences what is easily found and how the text is read; (c)

remediation (transitioning from print to digital) can alter the aesthetic and contextual experience—e.g., meaningful layout and typography may be lost if presented only with OCR without high-resolution images. Therefore, the proposed preservation strategy must encompass both technical and cultural aspects:

1. Preservation standards: save TIFF or PDF/A master copies, include checksums, and create separate copies (cold storage + mirrored repositories).
2. Metadata and discoverability: use Dublin Core or METS/ALTO (for OCR-ed texts) and thematic descriptions reflecting local cultural categories (e.g., "marwah," "oral tradition") to facilitate cultural-topic searches.
3. Access rights and partnerships: manage copyright rules, engage authors/former editors and the collection's community (a participatory approach) for moral and practical legitimacy.
4. Context conservation: preserve cover images, tables of contents, and editorial columns (to maintain rhetorical context), not just transcript text—as many discursive claims depend on editorial positioning and layout. (Note: These initial steps were already undertaken in the research—scanning and cataloging of the recovered editions.)

Figures 3 and 4: Covers of Dawat, Editions 3 and 4 (1996)



Combining technical and cultural aspects will make digitization not just archiving, but a process that maintains the interpretive and political dimensions of journals—a point worth emphasizing if this research is intended as a contribution to the study of cultural archives.

V. CONCLUSION

This research demonstrates that the Dawat Cultural Journal is an important intellectual medium that captures the dynamics of Riau Malay thought and identity construction in the 1990s. Through a cultural discourse analysis of the four documented editions, three key findings emerge.

First, Dawat functions as a space for representation and decolonization of knowledge. The evolving discourse demonstrates a shift from identity awareness to cultural action and theoretical reflection, in line with Hall's (1997) view that cultural identity is always constructed and negotiated. Second, the dominant themes in Dawat—Malay identity and dignity, literature and oral tradition, and intellectuality and history—demonstrate an effort to build bridges between the academic world and folk culture. Dawat not only documents culture but also produces local knowledge with epistemic value. Third, Dawat's digitization efforts represent a strategic step in knowledge preservation. This process is not merely technical archiving, but rather an epistemological practice that opens access, reinterpretation, and continuity of Malay intellectual heritage in the digital age.

Thus, Dawat can be understood as an arena for cultural discourse that combines cultural, epistemic, and documentary functions. It not only preserves the history of Malay culture but also emphasizes the importance of local knowledge as a basis for the formation of cultural identity and policy in Indonesia.

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