

# USTAZ HANAFI HAJI AHMAD: CHAMPIONING NATIONALISM, CULTURE, AND ISLAMIC VALUES IN SENI SILAT CEKAK MALAYSIA

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**Abstract:** *Ustaz Hanafi has fostered a sense of unity among members of the Persatuan Seni Silat Cekak Malaysia (PSSCM), not only by nurturing expertise in silat but also by instilling a deep sense of national pride. This paper offers insights into Ustaz Hanafi's philosophy of nationalism, focusing on his efforts to cultivate love for the nation among PSSCM members. Through interviews with 15 PSSCM members directly mentored by Ustaz Hanafi, this study highlights his national consciousness, exemplified by one of PSSCM's core principles: "do not denigrate other authentic Malay silat." Ustaz Hanafi's patriotism is evident in his choice to use "Malaysia" rather than his own name (Hanafi or Ustaz Hanafi) in PSSCM's branding, emphasizing that this martial art belongs to the country and its citizens. To preserve cultural heritage and promote knowledge advancement, Ustaz Hanafi champions the philosophy that "Science and technology can be learned anywhere; but culture remains ours," reminding PSSCM members to always uphold Malay culture wherever they may be. Not only does Ustaz Hanafi uphold Malay culture, but he also ensures that it aligns with Islamic principles, such as showing high respect for the female community in learning Seni Silat Cekak Malaysia (SSCM). Female trainers are provided for female students to prevent any abuse towards women by men. Despite being a nationalist, Ustaz Hanafi incorporates Islamic practices into Seni Silat Cekak Malaysia (SSCM), making this martial art accessible to people of all races worldwide. In conclusion, this study recognizes Ustaz Hanafi as a dedicated individual with deep love for religion, nation, and country. His steadfast commitment to instilling noble values in PSSCM members underscores his principled and unwavering character.*

**Keywords:** *Ustaz Hanafi, Nationalism, Islamic Value, Culture, Seni Silat Cekak Malaysia*

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## Introduction

The nationalism within oneself is crucial to ensure loyalty to the country. However, currently, nationalism is significantly lacking due to the scarcity of activities aimed at fostering it. As a result, many people are indifferent towards their country and nation. Nationalism is a form of love for the homeland, expressed through various defenses of one's own nation without undermining other nations, with the aim of achieving the values of Pancasila that exist in a country (Aisy et al., 2021). Instilling nationalism within individuals must also incorporate Islamic values to ensure moderation and avoid extremism towards any nation. Instilling nationalism in the younger generation is particularly challenging in the globalization era due to the internationalization of all aspects of modern society (Agus & Zulfahmi, 2021). Wulandari et al. (2021) found an urgent need to increase nationalism in Gen-Z, as their sense of nationalism is reduced compared to other generations. This reduction in nationalistic spirit is also influenced by factors such as the slow preservation of culture compared to the pace of globalization (Saputra & Najicha, 2024).

Ustaz Hanafi Haji Ahmad, the founder of Persatuan Seni Silat Cekak Malaysia (PSSCM), exhibited high nationalism. This was evident when he joined politics before founding the society to make a significant contribution to his nation and country. His loyalty was so profound that he competed against the prominent candidate, Tunku Abdul Rahman (Malaysia's first Prime Minister), to win an election and serve the country (Ahmad, 1978), initially called Persatuan Seni Silat Chekak Kedah Malaysia.

Aisy et al. (2021) emphasized the importance of high nationalism in the younger generation, which can positively impact the nation and country. However, nationalism has been observed to decline recently due to the influence of Western culture. A study on enhancing nationalism through PPKn at the fundamental level found that nationalism should be instilled from childhood, and educators should possess strong nationalistic values for their students to emulate (Andara et al., 2021). Prakasih et al. (2021) explored the possibility of instilling nationalism in multicultural education. They suggested that nationalism could be integrated into multicultural education through content adjustment, knowledge preparation processes, reducing prejudice, pedagogical equality, and fostering a school culture that promotes tolerance and avoids radicalism. Nursamsi and Jumardi (2022) studied the role of educators in instilling nationalism in the classroom, observing that sharing stories about independence warriors is an effective method. The values of godliness, religiosity, humanity, Indonesian unity, deliberation and representation, and national justice are the Pancasila values crucial for fostering nationalism (Nafisah & Dewi, 2022).

Based on the above, it is evident that preserving the spirit of nationalism is critical to ensure that the young generation appreciates their nation and country. Although most published studies focus on Indonesia, Malaysia faces similar issues, as investigated by Mokhtar and Lokman (2016). Ustaz Hanafi, the founder of Persatuan Seni Silat Cekak Malaysia (PSSCM), exemplifies a strong nationalistic spirit, and his efforts to spread this spirit among Malaysians should be recognized and emulated to inspire the younger generation. The study of Ustaz Hanafi's character began with M.A. Maoinser (2024) examining his role as Guru Silat. This paper continues investigating his character as PSSCM's founder, former President (first), and Guru Utama.

## Methodology

The study on Ustaz Hanafi's leadership in PSSCM was conducted using a qualitative approach to gather detailed information and explore the impact of his leadership on the organization's policies and practices. This method was chosen to gain in-depth insights into Ustaz Hanafi's role in shaping PSSCM's direction and ethos.

To achieve the study's objectives, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 15 active members of PSSCM who had direct experience learning from Ustaz Hanafi. These respondents were selected based on their close association with the founder and their long-standing involvement in the organization, ensuring that their insights would be credible and relevant. The selection was facilitated by a preliminary meeting with the 3rd President and Guru Utama of PSSCM, Datuk Haji Maideen Kadir Shah. The interview questions were designed to elicit detailed accounts of Ustaz Hanafi's nationalisme principt.

The interviews were recorded and transcribed for thorough analysis. Thematic analysis was employed to identify recurring themes, patterns, and key insights from the participants' responses (Cernasev & Axon, 2023). This method allowed for the extraction of significant information regarding Ustaz Hanafi's nationalistic characteristics, such as his patriotism, principles, and strategies as a former President and Guru Utama of PSSCM.

## Result and Discussion

### Patriotisme

Ustaz Hanafi is known for his love of his nation, religion, and country. His patriotic spirit is highlighted in a story told by Ar. Dr. Majid Ismail. This story takes place during the Bulan Cepak event organized by Persatuan Seni Silat Cepak Universiti Sains Malaysia (PSSCM USM) in 1972. At that time, Ustaz Hanafi chose the theme "Sains dan teknologi boleh dipelajari di mana-mana, tetapi budaya adalah hak kita" ("Science and technology can be learned anywhere, but culture is our right"). This theme was crucial in reminding many academicians, who had returned from studying overseas and were influenced by Western culture, to maintain their Malay cultural identity. For instance, it was common to see male lecturers who had studied in the United States wearing shorts and female lecturers wearing skirts, reflecting Western cultural influence. Ustaz Hanafi's theme was a reminder to always practice and uphold Malay culture, regardless of overseas education.

Ustaz Hanafi's patriotism is further exemplified by his response to an Aidilfitri greeting card from Ar. Dr. Majid Ismail, where he wrote:

*"Tuntutlah ilmu yang bermanfaat, jangan tuntut ilmu yang tidak bermanfaat. Selamat Hari Raya."* ("Seek beneficial knowledge, do not seek knowledge that is not beneficial. Happy Eid.")

Ustaz Hanafi was also dedicated to protecting religious identity and local culture among Malaysian citizens. His bravery in defending traditional Malay values against Western influence demonstrates his strong will and commitment to preserving Malay culture in alignment with Islamic values and local traditions.

### Strategies

Ustaz Hanafi's profound and far-sighted mentality makes him a strategic thinker and an adept organizer. One of his notable contributions was recognizing the importance of human capital

development as a key factor in driving and sustaining the country's economic growth. Dr. Roziah and En. Ibrahim both acknowledged that Ustaz Hanafi was the first to successfully instill the concept of human capital development in his students.

*“Ustaz Haji Hanafi discussed human capital decades ago. Today, people are searching for ways to develop human capital, talking about the Rukun Negara, and how to educate troubled youths, but Ustaz Haji Hanafi had already seen the need to develop human capital long ago,”* said Dr. Roziah and En. Ibrahim during their interview.

In addition to focusing on the country's economic development, Ustaz Hanafi emphasized the importance of human capital development aligned with Malay culture through the five principles of Silat Cekak, which are synonymous with its practitioners. This viewpoint is supported by YM Datuk Haji Maideen and En. Safaran in their interviews.

*“Ustaz Haji Hanafi used a very straightforward method to educate us. He taught us to obey our teacher, mother, and father, avoid conflicts among ourselves, and not disparage other forms of silat,”* said YM Datuk Haji Maideen.

*“Ustaz Haji Hanafi advised us to adhere to five principles: obedience to our teacher, mother, and father, avoiding internal conflicts, and refraining from criticizing other forms of silat,”* added En. Safaran in his interview.

### **Principles**

Ustaz Hanafi is known for his high level of discipline, particularly regarding punctuality. He often used metaphors to remind his students about proper behavior. For instance, Tn. Haji Mohamed Izham recalls how Ustaz Hanafi commented on wearing a gold necklace and having long hair with the remark:

*“Nice necklace and hair...”*

Moreover, Ustaz Hanafi would leave an event if attendees arrived late or were not dressed according to the event's dress code. Despite his strictness, he was caring and loving, making it easy for his students to feel close to him.

*“Ustaz Haji Hanafi always emphasized the basics of life, especially concerning women. Ustaz said, ‘No matter how educated a woman is, she must know her way around the kitchen,’”* shared Pn. Faridah in an interview.

*“When he talked to us, he motivated us, making us feel confident, able to move forward, speak up, and discuss matters,”* said Pn. Sabariah.

Ustaz Hanafi was principled and brave, facing challenges with faith in Allah's will. For En. Rosman, Ustaz Hanafi was an Islamic nationalist, always seeking useful knowledge for the nation.

*“I sought knowledge that could affirm my shahada to Allah and His Messenger. I traveled all over Malaysia and to Siam, but I found the answer at home,”* he stated.

Ar. Dr. Majid described Ustaz Hanafi as someone who always stressed Islamic values without abandoning Malay culture. He emphasized cultural conservation over mere preservation. Pn. Norieda agreed, noting that Ustaz Hanafi upheld the principle of “Takkan Melayu hilang di dunia” (“The Malays will never vanish from the world”). Pn. Sabariah also echoed this sentiment, crediting Ustaz Hanafi with encouraging her continued involvement in Silat Cekak:

“Ustaz said, ‘I founded this silat for our people, the Malays... We want to help the Malays together,’” recalled Pn. Norieda.

“He told us to continue this struggle, not just for Malay Muslims or Muslims in Malaysia, but for Muslims worldwide,” added Pn. Sabariah.

“Don’t take what isn’t ours, even if it’s just 10 ringgit found on the street. If the owner desperately needs that 10 ringgit, and we take it, we might lose 20 ringgit someday,” shared Ar. Dr. Majid.

Ar. Dr. Majid explained that Ustaz Hanafi was firmly against corruption, using the 10 ringgit example to illustrate his point. He also aimed to instill a sense of true sacrifice among PSSCM members, fostering strong Malay-Islamic nationalism and sincerity in their duties without expecting rewards. This is evident as Silat Cekak instructors did not receive any allowances or salaries. The education and values imparted by Ustaz Hanafi were intended to be carried forward by future generations to contribute to the nation, religion, and country.

## Conclusion

The investigation into Ustaz Hanafi's pivotal role as the founder and first President of PSSCM reveals his profound impact on the organization's trajectory. Through qualitative analysis, this study examines Ustaz Hanafi as a person with strong nationalism, deeply rooted in Islamic values. His nationalism is intertwined with his Islamic knowledge, creating a unique and powerful patriotic spirit. Further investigation into Ustaz Hanafi's character is needed to fully understand his Islamic nationalism, which can serve as an inspiration for the younger generation.

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