



## The Correlation between Nationalism and Maqasid al-Shari'ah Values in The Film Mat Kilau: Kebangkitan Pahlawan (2022)

Maqasid  
al-Syariah

*Korelasi Antara Semangat Nasionalisme dan Nilai  
Maqasid al-Shari'ah Dalam Filem Mat Kilau:  
Kebangkitan Pahlawan (2022)*

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MUHAMMAD ZAKI RAMLE

(Corresponding Author)

Akademi Tamadun Islam

Fakulti Sains Sosial dan Kemanusiaan

Universiti Teknologi Malaysia, Skudai

81310 Johor Bahru, Johor, Malaysia

[muhdzakiramle@gmail.com](mailto:muhdzakiramle@gmail.com)

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MUHAMMAD ADAM DANIAL

MUHAMMAD SAFWAN HARUN

Jabatan Fiqh-Usul dan Sains Gunaan

Akademi Pengajian Islam, Universiti Malaya

50603 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

[muhammadadamdanial@um.edu.my](mailto:muhammadadamdanial@um.edu.my)

[Safone15@um.edu.my](mailto:Safone15@um.edu.my)

### ABSTRACT

As an effort to instil the spirit of nationalism, the film industry is a powerful platform for conveying moral values and fostering awareness within the community. The film Mat Kilau: Kebangkitan Pahlawan (2022) has become a benchmark in the local film industry, where it received an overwhelming positive response from the community. This film successfully displayed elements of nationalism while also positively reflecting the image of Islam in resisting any form of colonisation. Nationalism in Mat Kilau's struggle had a clear relevance to Islam and its values. Thus, this study aimed to analyse the correlation of nationalism values in the film Mat Kilau: Kebangkitan Pahlawan (2022) with maqasid al-shari'ah. A qualitative research design through a content analysis of films was conducted. The results of the study showed that the value of Islamic nationalism under the category of maqasid 'ammah which includes freedom, peace and justice. These values play a significant role in ensuring the preservation of public interest (maslahah) in the national context, as well as fostering the spirit of unity within the community. This study reinforces the understanding that unity and nationalism align with the principles of maqasid al-shari'ah in the context of a Madani Malaysian society.

**Keywords:** Nationalism, Maqasid al-Shari'ah, Correlation, Mat Kilau, Film





## ABSTRAK

Sebagai satu usaha untuk menyemai semangat nasionalisme, industri perfileman merupakan medium yang berpengaruh dalam menyampaikan nilai-nilai moral serta memupuk kesedaran dalam kalangan masyarakat. Filem *Mat Kilau: Kebangkitan Pahlawan* (2022) telah menjadi penanda aras dalam industri filem tempatan apabila menerima sambutan yang amat menggalakkan daripada masyarakat. Filem ini berjaya menampilkan elemen nasionalisme yang turut menzahirkan imej Islam secara positif dalam menentang sebarang bentuk penjajahan. Nasionalisme dalam perjuangan *Mat Kilau* pula mempunyai kaitan yang jelas dengan Islam serta nilai-nilainya. Justeru, kajian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis korelasi nilai-nilai nasionalisme dalam filem *Mat Kilau: Kebangkitan Pahlawan* (2022) dengan maqasid al-shari'ah. Reka bentuk kajian kualitatif melalui analisis kandungan filem telah dijalankan. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahawa nilai nasionalisme Islam tergolong di bawah kategori maqasid 'ammah yang merangkumi kebebasan, keamanan dan keadilan. Nilai-nilai ini memainkan peranan penting dalam memastikan kemaslahatan dalam konteks kenegaraan terpelihara, selain menanam semangat perpaduan dalam kalangan masyarakat. Kajian ini memperkukuh pemahaman bahawa perpaduan dan nasionalisme sejajar dengan prinsip maqasid al-shari'ah dalam konteks masyarakat Malaysia Madani.

**Kata Kunci:** Nasionalisme, Maqasid al-Shari'ah, Korelasi, *Mat Kilau*, Filem

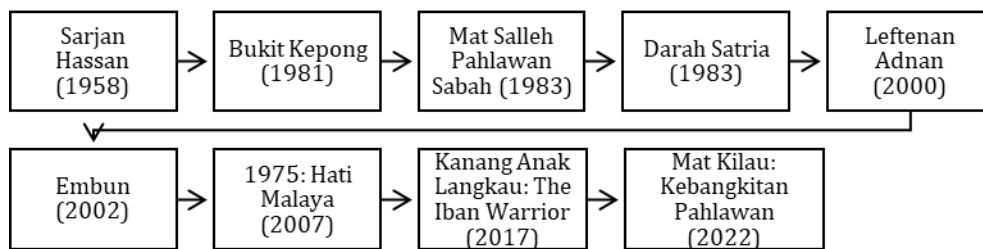
## INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of the film *Mat Kilau: Kebangkitan Pahlawan* was a proof that today's society, especially the young generation needs this genre as a medium to inject the spirit of nationalism into their identity and to appreciate the glorious history of national heroes. The film industry is a powerful medium that has the potential to infuse the spirit of nationalism into the local community. The film *Mat Kilau: Kebangkitan Pahlawan* (2022), which clocked in at 1 hour 58 minutes is a historical film directed by Syamsul Yusof who won the Best Director Award at the 57th Asia Pacific Film Festival (FFAP). The film production was inspired by the story of Mat Kilau's struggle to highlight the prominence of this historical figure which is recorded in Malay history. This film was released in 2022 and started showing on June 23, 2022. Briefly, this film was set at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and tells the story of a Malay warrior, Mat Kilau, along with his father Tok Gajah and his companions who fought desperately against the British colonialists as a counter-reaction to the pressure from the British which imposed a tax system, reaped the wealth of the land and interfered in the customary and religious affairs of the Malays in Pahang.

Although this film created a new phenomenon, production of this genre needs to be sustained. This can be understood through the statement of the President of the Malaysian Artistes' Association, Zed Zaidi who acknowledged that this country is still lacking in historical and patriotic films like *Mat Kilau: Kebangkitan Pahlawan* (Kementerian Komunikasi Dan Digital[a], 2022). On the other hand, light genre movies loaded with love narratives, musicals, horror, action, and comedy are easier to

produce and are immensely popular with fans of local films (Jusoh, 2022). On the other hand, films with historical epic elements require accurate facts and in-depth research to not cause any controversy that could offend any party. As a result, not many producers were willing to produce a film with a historical theme. Furthermore, historical films were less favourable to the audience due to the heavy narrative content. These films cost a lot in production and do not bring much in commensurate returns (Daud et al., 2017). Due to these, until 2023, only nine films featuring themes of the struggle of national figures against the colonialists have been produced by local producers. The films are as follows:

Figure 1: List of nationalistic films that portray the struggle against colonialism



However, the film titled *Mat Kilau: Kebangkitan Pahlawan* produced by Studio Kembara has been successful in bucking the tide of the film industry and opening the eyes of various parties to the importance of history-themed films. In short, this film breathed new life into the nation's film industry. After 33 days of screening, the film netted nearly RM100 million and beat other films in the 'All Time International Malaysia Box Office' category (Mohamad, 2022). As a result of these achievements, this film won the Box Office Film Award at the 32<sup>nd</sup> Malaysian Film Festival (FFM-32) organised by National Film Development Corporation Malaysia (FINAS) (Kementerian Komunikasi Dan Digital[b], 2022).

Despite these shortcomings, the film was well-received by local film enthusiasts and enjoyed a phenomenal success that led to the "Mat Kilau fever". It was such that movie-goers brought the spirit of 'resurrection of heroes' by wearing traditional clothing of Malay heroes featuring the *kain samping* and *tanjak* with some performing *silat*, the Malay martial arts. This added to its attraction as the film included some dramatic fictional elements, thrilling action scenes, gallant Malay martial arts, great acting, as well as aesthetic and expressive dialogues while loaded with messages of nationalism and patriotism. However, the sentiment and enthusiasm towards nationalism are ineffectual if the Islamic values are not appreciated. Concerning this, the correlation between the values of the spirit of nationalism and *maqasid al-shari'ah* in the film *Mat Kilau: Kebangkitan Pahlawan* (2022) will be analysed.



## NATIONALISM FROM ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVE

Nationalism is defined as a movement that uplifts the spirit of love for the country and the spirit of belonging through historical experiences that aim to free the community of people and the country from being colonised (Hasan et al., 2019). There are two forms of definitions. First, nationalism is a deep feeling of love for the country and community of people instilled in one's heart. Second, nationalism as a movement for economic and political freedom from the dominance of foreign powers (Kamus Dewan, 2010). Therefore, nationalism can be defined as an ideology that explains the attitude and approach related to the fight against colonialism and the preservation of the community of people and the country.

In explaining the concept of nationalism, various interpretations were suggested by several historians, among them was Dr. Burhanuddin al-Helmi who explained that the struggle against the colonialists must be based on a strong unity and uniformity as a "National Front" (Said, 2008). All efforts against colonialism should be used to achieve independence by adhering to the order, and polite manners of the Malay community of people and Islam. In terms of the awakening of this spirit, it arose as a result of several factors. According to Halim (2013), the emergence of the spirit of nationalism in Malaya stemmed from the pressure and influence of the British which led to the rise of Malay figures who were vocal in raising awareness of the importance of their rights, as well as demanding protection for their rights that had been violated and also redeeming the dignity of the country that had been colonised for a long time. In addition, nationalism also arose as a result of the community's concerns about the economic effects, the influence of secularism and Western imperialism that was affecting Malaya at that time (Roff, 1965).

In the study by Hafizuddin & Musa (2021), differences between Islamic nationalism and the understanding of Western nationalism were mentioned. Western nationalism was focusing more on the concept of national spirit, which refers to the spirit driven by the blood and lineage of the same group. This understanding emphasised quiet obedience and allegiance to the group until it gave rise to a feeling of flattery, belongingness and defending the community of people regardless the matter was good or bad, right or wrong (Abdullah, 2005). Therefore, this understanding is contrary to the hadis of the Prophet S.A.W. regarding the prohibition of *'asabiyyah* which is to defend and take sides with their own race or community of people even when injustice is committed. In a hadis narrated by Ibn Majah, it is mentioned: "*Fusaylah said: I heard my father say, "I asked the Messenger of God, O Messenger of God, is a person who loves his people (his people) a fanatic ('asabiyyah)?" The Prophet S.A.W replied: "No, fanaticism ('asabiyyah) is when a person helps and favours his people for an injustice."* (Ibn Majah, Hadith no. 3949).

Based on this hadis, it was clear that Rasulullah S.A.W. did not prohibit the spirit of belonging (*'asabiyyah*) as long as it did not cause any injustice. However, Western nationalism which is fanatical and defends tyranny is contrary to the principles of Islamic teaching itself. In addition, Western nationalism also separates the role of religion



and politics. It distinguishes people from the aspects of race and homeland, rather than based on a person's religion or faith. Therefore, Western nationalism has a strong relationship with the characteristics of secularism that focuses on absolute freedom in worldly aspects and consider religious institutions to be exclusively for divine affairs (Ibrahim, 2019).

In general, the concept of Malay nationalism refers to a local movement towards the formation of a nation and its community of people. It is the awareness of a group of people who enjoy some similarities but differ in race, religion and culture whilst having deep feelings of love for the homeland that they are willing to sacrifice their lives in defence of the country (Abdullah, 2005). This illustrates the characteristic of Islamic nationalism which is universal as it does not create a gap in lineage, creed, colour, country or region. The nature of loving one's homeland is an instinctive disposition bestowed on man. The Prophet Muhammad S.A.W. loved his birthplace Makkah based on a hadis narrated by Ibn 'Abbās: "How good you are, O Makkah, and how much I love you, if my people did not remove me from you, I will not live apart from you." (Al-Tirmidhī, Hadith no. 3926).

#### **MAQASID AL-SHARI'AH IN THE UMMAH AND STATE CONTEXT**

Discussions on the definition of the term *maqasid al-shari'ah* can be grouped into two main categories of scholars: the classical or traditional scholars and the contemporary scholars. In this regard, the understanding of *maqasid al-shari'ah* was not explained in detail by scholars in the past until Al-Shatibi (Razak et al., 2023). Along with the passage of time and the developments in knowledge sources, modern scholars have begun to give special emphasis on *maqasid al-shari'ah* as one discipline of knowledge. This is noticeable when the scope of discussions of *maqasid al-shari'ah* began to expand through the works that have been produced. As a result, there are various definitions of *maqasid al-shari'ah*:

a. Auda (2014): *Maqasid al-shari'ah* as the wisdom behind *ahkam* laws and all good purposes that *shari'ah* upholds is based on Islamic law such as individual dignity and purity. His theory indirectly expanded the individualistic concept in the definition of *maqasid* by past scholars to the modernisation of the *maqasid al-shari'ah*'s theory which protects human rights (Ni'ami & Bustamin, 2021). The reality of that aspect was focused on earlier by a figure involved in the Islamic movement, namely al-Qaradawi (2008) who explained *maqasid al-shari'ah* as "the goals that become the objective of the *shari'ah* in commands, prohibitions, and imperatives. These goals are accomplished in the life of the *mukallaf* (individual, family, and community) through *juz'iyyah* laws."

b. Al-Zuhayli (2015): *Maqasid al-shari'ah* is the meaning that has been outlined in most or all areas of *shari'ah* or the wisdom that has been established by *al-Shari'* (Allah S.W.T.) in each of its laws.



c. Suhaimi et al. (2023): *Maqasid al-shari'ah* as the purpose of Islamic law in achieving happiness and prosperity in this world and the hereafter by avoiding damages and retaining the benefits.

From the definitions, it can be concluded that *maqasid al-shari'ah* is the provision of law by *al-Shari'* to achieve benefits and bring all good in human life (Harun et al., 2021; Ibrahim & Harun, 2024). The discussion of *maqasid al-shari'ah* did not stop at the purely theoretical book-keeping of *maqasid* knowledge. In fact, the discourse had begun to gain a place among academicians and Islamic scholars who conducted extensive studies of *maqasid al-shari'ah* and applied it in the current context (Mahmad & Mahmud, 2020). The application of *maqasid al-shari'ah* is also adapted across various fields of studies. Among the fields that have become more prominent nowadays is the study of *maqasid al-shari'ah* in Islamic finance, Islamic banking, Islamic microloans and *waqaf* (Tubarad et al., 2022). In addition, there are also applications in other contexts including the field of medical fatwas, guidance and regulations in the execution of worship during the COVID-19 pandemic, national development and others. Due to the diversity of contexts, it has become the basis for highlighting the elements of *maqasid al-shari'ah* in the content of local films that highlight the spirit of nationalism as the theme.

Discussions on *maqasid al-shari'ah* are apparent through its various divisions, including *maqasid al-shari'ah al-'ammah*, *maqasid al-shari'ah al-khassah* and *maqasid al-shari'ah al-juz'iyyah* (Al-Yubi, 1998). Ibn 'Ashur stated that *maqasid al-shari'ah al-'ammah* is the goal and wisdom considered by *al-Shari'* in all or most aspects of *shari'ah* without any specific adherence to a particular Islamic law (Ibn 'Ashūr, 2001). According to Al-Yubi (1998), *maqasid 'ammah* is the general objective of *shari'ah* that covers all branches of *shari'ah* in matters of worship, *mu'amalat*, *'adat* and *jinayat*. He also added that preserving good and avoiding harm are also categorised as *maqasid 'ammah*. In addition, 'Allal al-Fasi also listed clear examples of the general purpose of *shari'ah* such as proper exploration and utilisation of the produce of the earth, maintaining harmony in living side by side and establishing an administration that is favourable to all levels of society (al-Fasi, 1993). Therefore, all the characteristics of *maqasid 'ammah* mentioned are included under the context of preserving and upholding the welfare of the *ummah* which includes the values of peace, freedom and justice.

The first Islamic scholar to emphasise the welfare of the *ummah* from the *shari'ah*'s perspective was Ibn 'Ashur (Wardi et al., 2023). The interests of the community shall not be materialised if all actions are tied to the decisions of other parties. For this reason, Ibn 'Ashur (2001) viewed the value of freedom as a part of the purpose of *shari'ah* in general. From the linguistic point of view, freedom is the opposite of slavery. Freedom from the perspective of *maqasid al-shari'ah* means that everyone has full power over themselves in all actions and without any constraints. For example, the freedom of religion or belief, freedom in giving opinions and freedom of working. All parties are free to do whatever they want in addition to voicing their experiences and views on a topic. However, this value needs to be used as best as possible without violating the



boundaries that have been set by *shari'ah* so that no major damages are incurred to the country (Husni, 2020). All oppression and violence against this value is considered as a form of tyranny.

In addition, freedom is also understood as a choice that lies in the hands of oneself, whether one wants to do something or not (al-Khatib, 1993). Islam strongly opposes the system of slavery as widely practiced in ancient times. Those who were made slaves were ordered to work in the fields and herd livestock. Thus, the presence of Islam with its noble principles abolished such practices (Ibn 'Ashur, 2001). Along with time, *maqasid al-shari'ah* which in the traditional sense only focused on the preservation of the five main essences or principles eventually also included freedom and human rights (Suhaimi et al., 2023).

Next, 'Atiyyah (2001) expanded the scope of *maqasid al-shari'ah al-'ammah* to include *maqasid* of various levels of society. Basically, Islam is a religion that advocates peace and security. Therefore, within the framework of the *ummah*, the relevance of *maqasid al-shari'ah* is bound to a peaceful atmosphere that needs to be maintained holistically. The peace cited was divided into internal factors (taking care of oneself, and one's property) and external factors (*jihad* against the invasion by external forces). In fact, the value of peace is included in the *maslahah daruriyyah* category. The preservation of aspects of life, property, intellect, and religion is classified as one aspect of peace (Adenan & Ab Rahman, 2021). Furthermore, its importance is apparent in the religion as the term "Islam" itself means peace and security (Termizi et al., 2020). A peaceful and tranquil environment is a blessing that every human being should enjoy, as their basic right. For this reason, any form of violence that causes insecurity to the public must be completely avoided. The series of wars that had been recorded in world history were among the obvious examples of threats inflicted upon the peace of the people of a country.

In addition, upholding justice is also part of *maqasid al-shari'ah al-'ammah* ('Atiyyah, 2001). Justice means placing something in its rightful place, appropriate, and fulfilling the rights of those who are entitled (Harun, 2021). In Islamic law, the demand to act justly is not only limited to the segments of human life such as economics and marriage but also involves justice in the management of Islamic law such as the procedure for issuing fatwas ('Ababtein, 2020). Hence, justice has its exclusive value in Islamic law. Justice is particularly important as the implementation of justice in the country is a huge affair that is borne by the chief, be it the king or the leaders.

In the social context, justice must be given to all parties regardless of religion, race, skin colour, language and such. Social justice is often demanded and fought for by all races of mankind consisting of various groups. The uniqueness of justice in Islam covers all groups without distinguishing them and this illustrates how Islam applies the concept of justice. The call to be fair and just is not only limited to the believers of the same religion but includes those of different religious beliefs (Ridho & Baidhlowi, 2021). In accordance with the concept of justice according to *shari'ah*, it means to place or to fulfill the rights of those who are entitled. Therefore, it can be concluded that social



justice is the equal value of fellow members in the community in terms of rights and responsibilities in the social field (Zarifi & Taqwa, n.d). Both Western and Islamic scholars acknowledged that justice should be upheld and fought for regardless of culture, religion, race, skin colour, and such. The belief is that social justice is a universal human right that must be defended (Shamsuddin et al., 2021).

Based on the above interpretations, freedom, peace and justice are the objectives of *shari'ah* to create uprightness in every social layer of society. Furthermore, all these values guarantee human rights in continuing to live in this world in line with the demands of the *shara'*. The presence of *shari'ah* solely is to ensure that people get various kinds of goodness while also complying with the original concept of *shari'ah* itself, which is to enjoin the good and forbid the wrong (Ridwan et al., 2023).

## METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative content analysis in its methodology. Content analysis is a form of document analysis using print media and electronic media that falls under the category of popular general documents (Darusalam & Husin, 2021). In the context of this study, the content analysis was conducted through the electronic media of movies. The film *Mat Kilau: Kebangkitan Pahlawan* (2022) directed by Syamsul Yusof was chosen as a study sample. This film was selected based on the purposive sampling method. The main criterion for choosing the film *Mat Kilau: Kebangkitan Pahlawan* (2022) lies in the strong promotion of nationalism. This movie had an airing time of 1 hour and 50 minutes through the Netflix application for the data collection process. The goal of watching the film is to comprehend the overall plot consisting of the narrative plot and identify scenes that contain elements of nationalism and relate them to the perspective of *maqasid al-shari'ah* in the context of nationhood. The scope of this study is limited to discussion on the elements of peace, freedom, and justice. These elements were chosen based on their prominence as dominant factors within the film as well as their importance in preserving the sovereignty of the homeland in accordance with Islam.

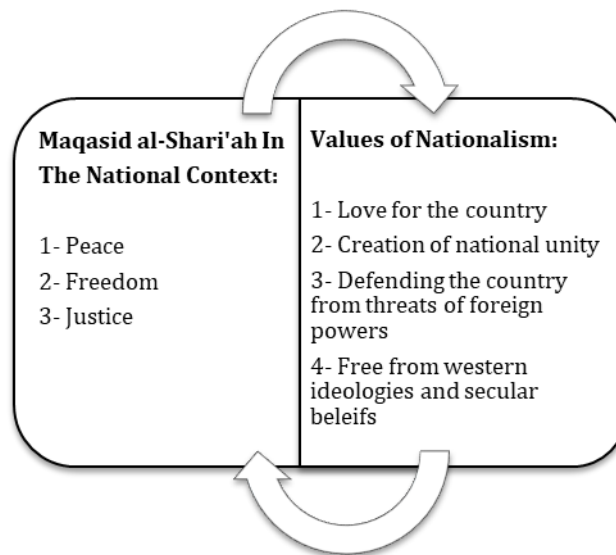
Furthermore, data analysis was conducted using the thematic analysis method which is a method of analysing qualitative data to distinguish the themes in the film by identifying, analysing, and reporting the forms of theme in the research topic (James Cook University, 2023). Prior to the coding process, the film had to be viewed several times to classify the elements of *maqasid al-shari'ah* within the context of the *ummah*. Focus was accorded to each character, dialogue, and scene and followed by an analysis through coding of the elements of *maqasid al-shari'ah* in the film *Mat Kilau: Kebangkitan Pahlawan* (2022).

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### The Relationship Between Maqasid al-Shari'ah in the Context of the State and Nationalism

*Maqasid al-shari'ah* and nationalism in the framework of the country go hand in hand in promoting national independence. In order to build a peaceful and harmonious country, such a relationship is required. Without one, the goal of developing the country would not be achieved. Accordingly, developing a country based on the principles of *maqasid al-shari'ah* can ensure the well-being of a society and provide benefits for everyone regardless of creed and colour. This approach emphasises the significance of universal values that are shared by all people such as peace, freedom and justice to create a harmonious community. To achieve these universal values, the country needs individuals who uphold the spirit of love for the homeland, foster the unity, protect the country from colonial forces and liberate the thinking from Western secular ideologies. Based on these premises, it is clear that the scope of *maqasid al-shari'ah* debate encompasses more than only *fiqh*-related issues, it touches on the nationalism of a country as well (Ismail, 2021).

Diagram 2: The relationship between *maqasid al-shari'ah* in the framework of the country and nationalism



Through this perspective, a country that has gained its independence is not only free to determine its own administration and government but is also free from any system that conflicts with the goals of *shari'ah* as stated in the five principles of *maqasid al-shari'ah* which is to preserve the religion (*hifz al-din*), preserve the life (*hifz al-nafs*), preserve the lineage (*hifz al-nasl*), preserve the intellect (*hifz al-'aql*) and preserve the property (*hifz al-mal*). In addition to adherence to the five basic principles, upholding the relationship between *maqasid al-shari'ah* in the framework of the country and nationalism implicitly



encourages people to express a sense of responsibility to preserve the country (*hifz al-watan*). Awareness of preserving the country is important as the country is a place of shelter and a shared sense of belonging must be appreciated and maintained (Bachri et al., 2021). In summary, the relationship between *maqasid al-shari'ah* in the framework of the country and nationalism is illustrated in Diagram 2, presented above.

### **An Analysis of Nationalism from the Perspective of Maqasid al-Shari'ah in the Film Mat Kilau: Kebangkitan Pahlawan**

In general, the film *Mat Kilau: Kebangkitan Pahlawan* has an element of nationalistic spirit through the portrayal of characters and dialogues. In this regard, three themes, namely peace, freedom and justice as components of nationalism were found in the Mat Kilau movie. A total of six scenes that display the value of nationalism in the Mat Kilau movie are listed in Table 1 below:

Table 1: Elements of *Maqasid al-Shari'ah* and the Value of Nationalism in the film *Mat Kilau: Kebangkitan Pahlawan* (2022)

No.	Elements of <i>Maqasid al-Shari'ah</i>	Subtheme Elements of Nationalism in the film <i>Mat Kilau: Kebangkitan Pahlawan</i> (2022)	Duration
1	The Value of Peace	All the warriors pledged their <i>bai'ah</i> and loyalty to Mat Kilau to fight against the British colonialists together.	35:27
2		Mat Kilau gave advice and motivation to the villagers about the importance of defending the homeland.	32:09
3		Villagers joined the war <i>en masse</i> to expel the British from the land of Pahang.	16:54
4	The Value of Freedom	Mat Kilau opposed the implementation of the tax system enforced by the British at Kuala Tembeling Jetty.	1:25:44
5		Mat Kilau and his friends rescued Wahid who was being tortured in a British army camp.	44:41
6	The Value of Justice	Wahid did not neglect his responsibility to his wife and the responsibility to maintain the safety of the villagers.	1:05:43



### **Theme 1: The Value of Peace**

Peace is an important and a fundamental need (*masalahah daruriyyah*) for every individual, society and country. There must be peace for a country to function properly. If national security can be preserved, then peace and national sovereignty will be attained and people may live side by side peacefully in a loving, harmonious and peaceful environment (Ajmain et al., 2020). Therefore, Islam strongly promotes the concept of peace and strictly forbids its people from engaging in any form of violence that leads to the instability of society and the country. Every individual in an Islamic country must uphold peace, independence and national unity. Thus, in this film, there are two scenes that highlight Mat Kilau's efforts with his companions in preserving the peace of the land from being colonised by British forces.

#### *Pledge of Allegiance and Loyalty Following Mat Kilau's Struggle in Fighting the Colonialists*

*Bai'ah* is a pledge of loyalty to someone or support for an agreement to carry out something (Kamus Dewan, 2010). The scene showing the pledge of *bai'ah* given by the Hitam's and Kelubi's Team to Mat Kilau to fight and drive out the colonialists is one of the characteristics of the spirit of nationalism highlighted in the film. The *bai'ah* aimed to strengthen the commitment of Mat Kilau and his team so that they would not flee from the battlefield. This is evident when the entire team led by Hitam and Kelubi, together with Mat Kilau's friends, were taken aside by Awang into a cave to continue planning and building up their resistance against the British. Both Hitam and Kelubi Team had agreed to help Mat Kilau in a mission against the British. At the same time, Hitam and Kelubi also tried to enlist more villagers to join the battle, but they were only able to recruit five people. Although the number of their team was small, Mat Kilau and his team maintained their fighting spirit. Then Mat Kilau called out in front of his team: "Swear as hard as you can, the British colonialists are bastards, and all traitors must be fought to the end. This land of Pahang is a sovereign land." Then they replied: "We all swear, Kilau! We will fight against the colonialists until they can all be expelled from this historic Pahang land."

The scene demonstrates the pledge or *bai'ah* which was a *sunnah* of the Prophet Muhammad S.A.W. that was carried out by his companions several times while the Prophet S.A.W. was still alive. Among them was *bai'ah al-Ridwan* which happened during the *Hudaibiyyah* Treaty to wage *jihad* (Nugroho, 2025). *Bai'ah* is a pledge of loyalty given to Rasulullah S.A.W to fight the enemies and the warriors were to remain on the battlefield and face the enemy until the end of the war. Thus, the *bai'ah* pronounced by Hitam and Kelubi to Mat Kilau to protect the country is a *bai'ah* that is in compliance with Islamic practice which even earns great rewards for those who keep their promises.

Picture 1: Mat Kilau's meeting with the Hitam and Kelubi Team



### *Villagers Joined the War En Masse to Expel the British from the Land of Pahang*

In general, the British's pressure and influence led to the emergence of prominent Malay figures who strongly aroused awareness of the necessity of fighting for their rights, demanding the restoration of the rights that had been robbed from them and restoring the dignity of the nation that had been colonised for a long period of time (Ku Hasnan, 2013). This was demonstrated in the final scene of the film where Mat Kilau held a secret meeting at night with the villagers to convey advice and awareness about the importance of defending the homeland and calling them to stand together against the colonialists.

Although the villagers were initially divided on whether to participate in the mission, the continuous and unwavering efforts of Mat Kilau's wife and Tok Gajah yielded results. Eventually, the villagers joined in the war against the British. During the fierce battle that took place between Mat Kilau's people and the British army, the villagers arrived in large numbers to wage war against the British who were stunned to see that the Malays had united to fight against them. Although the Malays lacked weapons, they defeated the British in Malaya armed with the spirit of collaboration and solidarity among them.

Based on the situation, the villagers' responses to the call of *jihad* against the British is a decree by the *shari'ah*. In the context of Islamic law, *jihad* was originally optional. However, it becomes an obligation on Muslims in situations such as when Islamic countries are being attacked, eradicating slander about Islam, saving the weak and oppressed or fear of being attacked by enemies who are resolute to attack (al-Qaradawi, 2009). In addition, there is evidence from the Qur'an that grants the permission to fight if Islam is oppressed as in the words of Allah S.W.T. means: "*Permission [to fight] has been given to those who are being fought, because they were wronged. And indeed, Allah is competent to give them victory.*" (Surah al-Hajj, 22: 39).

Islam allows its people to use war as a means of self-defence to protect the dignity of the religion, the community of people and the country if they are threatened. To flee from a country that is in a threatened situation, such as a war or an invasion affects the preservation of life (*hifz al-nafs*) of individuals. When a nation is under attack, such as

during a war or invasion, the people's ability to save their lives (*hifz al-nafs*) is impacted. Therefore, the role of maintaining peace is vital. If peace can be attained, conflict and war can be avoided and civil society can live in peace and harmony (Adenan & Ab Rahman, 2021).

Picture 2: Fighting between the villagers and British soldiers



## **Theme 2: The Value of Freedom**

Freedom in the context of independence can be interpreted as freedom from political colonialism, slavery, attachment and not depending on other people, nations or countries. The independence achieved by the country today is a form of freedom from colonial powers. The colonisation that took place was not only domination from a political point of view, but it was also colonisation in terms of religion, culture and wealth. In regard to the interpretation, nationalist fighters who freed the country from colonialism successfully transformed Malaya into a free and independent country (Roseli, 2021). The value of freedom can be identified in two scenes in which Mat Kilau saved the merchants from being harassed by British soldiers who imposed high taxes on the merchants and Mat Kilau freed Wahid, his friend who was tortured in the British concentration camp.

### *Mat Kilau Freed Merchants from Paying Taxes Enforced by the British*

The opening scene of the movie *Mat Kilau: Kebangkitan Pahlawan (2022)* depicted British soldiers at the beginning of implementing a tax system against traders at the Kuala Tembeling Jetty. This enforcement was based on instructions from J.P. Rodger (the English Resident) through the issuance of a warrant notice stating: "Each merchandise traded in Kuala Tembeling will be taxed from the scales for the purpose of financing development projects in the Jerantut, Raub, and surrounding areas." However, the amount of tax imposed was exorbitant and traders could not afford to pay it. The British authorities harassed traders who were not able to pay the high taxes imposed and confiscated their merchandise. A series of commotions that took place at the Kuala Tembeling Jetty has pushed Mat Kilau to help and save the traders who were being oppressed and against the implementation of taxes introduced by British soldiers.

The episode of Mat Kilau thwarting the British plan illustrated the nature of his strong nationalism to free the traders who were being oppressed. When there is an invasion and oppression of the local community, as in the case of the British who were given free rein to impose taxes and profit from traders, the goals of *shari'ah* (*hifz al-mal*) that protects individual property and public property would be compromised (Adenan & Ab Rahman, 2021). On the other hand, saving a Muslim brother who is being oppressed coincides with the recommendation of a hadis of the Prophet S.A.W narrated by Anas bin Malik: "Help your brother who is the oppressor and also the oppressed" (Sahih al-Bukhari, Hadis no. 2444). Therefore, this hadis becomes a call for Muslims to help each other in situations such as being oppressed or afflicted with hardship.

Picture 3: Mat Kilau saves the traders from being harassed by British soldiers



### *Mat Kilau Released Wahid who was Detained and Tortured in the British Concentration Camp*

In this scene, Mat Kilau and his friends launched an ambush at night by breaking into the premises of the British concentration camp. In the camp, Wahid was tied up and tortured by some British soldiers. The British had decided to execute Wahid that evening. As the British soldiers were positioning themselves to shoot Wahid, suddenly their camp came under attack by Awang and his friends who immediately rescued Wahid. In the fighting that ensued, the British camp was badly destroyed by Mat Kilau's comrades who carried out several attacks including setting the tents on fire, detonating bombs, destroying supplies and stored weapons and killing British soldiers.

The accomplishment of the mission to save Wahid from the British concentration camp shows the team spirit and courage of Mat Kilau's comrades. This attack was the result of an effective game plan and thorough planning. Failure in the mission to save Wahid would cause damage to Wahid's *hifz al-nafs* (life threat) because of continuously being tortured (*hifz al-'aql*). Plus, Wahid played a crucial role in the struggle, so the absence of Wahid could cause their struggle to stall and the number of warriors would decrease.

Picture 4: Wahid was tortured in a British camp



### **Theme 3: The Value of Justice**

Islam guarantees justice to all people regardless of religion, gender, and race. It is an obligation for every individual Muslim on this earth to uphold justice. Justice is a crucial principle in social life in creating balance, harmony and conformity in the lives of the multiracial human race (Baharom, 2019). The scholars divide justice into several categories, including justice towards oneself, justice towards the family which includes parents, husband, wife and relatives and justice towards the community which is social justice. However, the implementation of this concept of justice must be guided by a careful balance ensuring the outcome is just, fair, and beneficial while rejecting all forms of harm.

*Wahid Did Not Neglect His Responsibilities to His Wife and Did Not Neglect His Responsibilities to the Villagers*

In this film, the value of justice is portrayed in the character of Wahid when carrying out his responsibilities as a husband and as a fighter. Wahid had a significant role in society and government, and he was able to balance the responsibility of providing support to his wife in terms of clothing, the comfort of living, providing care, affection and love. However, Wahid's active involvement in Mat Kilau's struggle caused his wife, Rokiah to feel apprehensive about his safety. Arising from that, Rokiah pleaded to her husband to no longer participate in Mat Kilau's struggle and to not get involved in matters related to the white people. The main concern was that Rokiah still needed Wahid to continue living together and she did not want to risk her husband's life for someone else. The situation became tense for a while when Rokiah said: "Do you care more about the family or Mat Kilau's struggle?" Hearing this, Wahid immediately replied: "I value my religion and race more than anything else. Like it or not, the fact is that I would never change positions."

In the film, the situation faced by Wahid involved a major clash of priorities when it comes to deciding whether to be with his wife at home or to help Mat Kilau in the struggle. It involved the clash of *maslahah* in a general form and *maslahah* in a specific form. At the same time, there were other parties in the village community who willingly

chose to be with their families rather than get involved in Mat Kilau's struggle to preserve national security. However, Wahid showed the characteristics of nationalism and his ultimate sacrifice in protecting the rights of social justice and the rights of family members, namely his wife, without neglecting the responsibilities of both. Due to this awareness, Wahid rejected self-regard and showed that he cared about the situation around his village.

The nature of sacrifice shown by Wahid is in line with the demands of Islam which forbids its people to remain silent and run away from the battlefield. Such actions would harm the Muslims as the actions will help strengthen the opposing forces and become more oppressive, at the same time weakening the Muslim forces. Running away or turning one's back from *jihad* is categorised as one of the major sins. Abu Hurairah narrated the meaning of the hadis: "Avoid the seven (sins) that destroy!" They (the companions) asked: "O Messenger of Allah, what is it?" His Majesty replied, "Shirk to God, sorcery, killing a soul that God has forbidden except with Haq (the truth), taking usury, consuming the property of orphans, running away from the field of jihad, accusing adultery against free women who guard their honour, who believe, and who is clean from adultery." (Sahih al-Bukhari, Hadis no. 6465). More notably, there is a recommendation from the Qur'an to remain on the battlefield as mentioned in surah al-Anfal verse 15, meaning: "O you who believe, when you meet an infidel who is fighting you, do not retreat" (Surah al-Anfal, 8: 15).

Accordingly, social justice will not be fulfilled if the less fortunate in a society are not protected. Social justice will be realised if the able-bodied are jointly responsible for the welfare of the community (Nor & Muhammad, 2017). In the debate on the *maqasid* of justice, Ibnu Taimiyyah also mentioned that when two situations collide, it is the responsibility of everyone to help by prioritising the general *maslahah* over the specific and rejecting the more general *mafsadah* over the specific *mafsadah* (Lamda, 2014). Thus, Wahid's involvement in helping Mat Kilau's struggle is in line with the concept of justice to maintain the balance and harmony of society to ensure national security can be achieved.

Picture 5: Wahid's dialogue with his wife Rokiah when explaining the roles and responsibilities on his shoulders





## CONCLUSION

Films in the form of historical genres are very necessary nowadays, especially for the young generation in the 21<sup>st</sup> century to increase the value of their identity and the sense of love towards the country. The film *Mat Kilau: Kebangkitan Pahlawan (2022)* has succeeded in raising public awareness by bringing a great message about the hardships of the freedom fighters in restoring peace and defending the fate of the Malays who were oppressed by the presence of the British in the state of Pahang. The spirit of nationalism highlighted in the film has a correlation with *maqasid al-shari'ah* in the context of the ummah which includes the values of peace, freedom and justice. These universal values are the core of preserving the five main elements, namely religion, self, lineage, intellect and wealth. Therefore, in order to improve the quality of the country's film industry, films with elements of statehood and nationalism need to be further enriched in various forms of genres and story plots according to the current suitability. Efforts to dignify epic films based on nationalistic values need to be intensified to produce high-quality works for the local and international markets.

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