

# RELIGIOUS AND CULTURAL EMBODIMENT IN THE LAND OF OSING: A PORTRAIT OF HADRAMI COMMUNITY IN BANYUWANGI, EAST JAVA

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**Abstract:** This paper investigates the portrait of Hadrami community in the land of Osing in Banyuwangi, East Java. Banyuwangi is one of the legendary towns where the Majapahit kingdom's heritage was well preserved. This town is associated with indigenous ethnic people known as Osing, who have their own traditions, language, customs, and culture. Madurese, Javanese, Sundanese, Chinese, Europeans, and Hadramis are among the other ethnic groups that inhabit this region. Its diversity of languages, ethnic groups, and religions made Banyuwangi a welcoming place for Hadramis for centuries. During the Dutch East Indies, Hadramis conducted extensive trade via the island's South Sea; this area was a trading port in East Java. Hadrami community have permanently lived in the land of Osing since the early 18<sup>th</sup> century, bringing their livelihood, inter-ethnic marriage, Islamic teachings, and Arab culture. Therefore, this research examines religious and cultural embodiments between native people and Hadrami community in the land of Osing. The findings of this research show that Hadrami community in the land of Osing adopted local language for Islamic *da'wab*. Furthermore, the Hadrami community has had a cultural impact on fashion, food, music, and religious tourism, with umrah and hajj becoming increasingly popular among native people since the late nineteenth century.

**Keywords:** Hadrami; Embodiment; Muslim Society; Osing.

## Introduction

In the middle of the evening, a *ṣalawāt* concert was held in the Osing land, featuring a famous Hadrami, Habib Syech. It was in 2016 with thousands of people that flocked to the town square of this agricultural town. All participants and viewers of the concert from elderly, adult, youth, and children, all were excited, cheerful, and happy to enjoy the concert of Habib Syech. The show can be seen on YouTube.<sup>1</sup> This phenomenon demonstrated that Muslim communities in the land of Osing are loyal to Hadramis. They believe that Hadramis are the descendants of Prophet Muḥammad. However, the social structure of Hadramis plays important role for Muslim society in the land of Osing. Hadramis are generally categorized into three groups: *sayyid*, *mashāyikh* and *qabā'il*. These categories are divided into two different groups i.e. Alawi and non-Alawi. From Alawi genealogy, native people in the land of Osing call them as “habib” (Arabic: *ḥabīb*, pl. *ḥabā'ib*).

In addition to their roles as religious preachers and leaders, Hadrami community is well-known for their successful in trading and cultural as well as social transmission in this region. The mobility and economic activity of the Hadrami community were then severely restricted by the Dutch government.<sup>2</sup> Cultural assimilation, as in other regions, is the basis of Hadramis' acceptance in the land of Osing. For example, most Hadramis are able to speak local language of Osing, Madurese, or Javanese. On the other hand, Hadramis' existence demonstrates social, political, economic, and cultural dynamic. Hadrami community engaged in negotiations with the local community. Korobkin stated that negotiation is an interactive process has discussed the negotiation theory.<sup>3</sup> Negotiation in this sense is a bargaining process to reach mutual agreement on differences. In the beginning of Hadrami arrival in the land of Osing, the Dutch had controlled to their social, economic,

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<sup>1</sup> See: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SC2sNPvK1TE> (accessed April 27, 2022)

<sup>2</sup> Ismail Fajrie Alatas, “Between Abu Dhabi and Java: A Transnational Hadrami Family in an Era of Nation States,” *The Singapore Middle East Papers* 1 (Spring 2012), 46-65.

<sup>3</sup> Rusell Korobkin, *Negotiation Theory and Strategy* (N.p.: Aspen Publishers, 1992); T Alfredson and A Cungu, “Negotiation Theory and Practice: A Review of the Literature,” *FAO Policy Learning Programme* (2008).

and religious activities. In the 1850s, the Hadramis were not only local and inter-island traders and transporters, but they also profited from the opportunities that stemmed from the growth internal and overseas trade.<sup>4</sup>

The diaspora of Hadrami community in Indonesia was significantly growing since the Dutch census, which was before Japanese occupation in 1942 had proven there were about 50,000 Hadramis who settled in archipelago such as Sumatra, Jakarta, Cirebon, Pekalongan, Semarang, Tuban, Gresik, Surabaya, Pasuruan, Bondowoso, and including Banyuwangi.<sup>5</sup> Hadrami community was trading in Java islands in addition to their goal of Islamic *da'wah*. During 19<sup>th</sup> century, when they arrived the land of Osing they became successful in their business and sent money to their family living in Hadramaut. The basis of Hadrami identity in Indonesia are linked with patrilineal genealogy. The diaspora of Hadramis has particular characteristics in terms religious *da'wah*. They built a school so-called "Al-Irshad" around the center city of the land of Osing in 1931, it was to be a modern building to which there was no more schools elsewhere in the town.<sup>6</sup> Rapid population growth among Hadramis has coincided with the school's expansion. In order to keep children connected to their ancestors and customs, wealthy Hadramis in the land of Osing used to send their children to study in Hadramaut, although not all Hadramis in this land have opportunity returning to their homeland, Hadramawt, Yemen, especially their third generation. In the late 1990s, the Gulf War in the Middle East caused Hadramis in the land of Osing not to send their children to study in Yemen for security and geopolitical reasons. This was an instance of crisis, conflict, and gulf war in the Middle East countries, resulting in a diaspora of Arabs, including Hadramis, who chose to live outside of their region.

Thus, this paper tries to investigate Hadrami community in the context of religious and cultural embodiment. Although Ha-

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<sup>4</sup> Ismail Fajrie Alatas, "The Pangeran and the Saints: The Historical Inflection of a Mid 19th-Century Hadrami Mausoleum in East Java, Indonesia," *Indonesia and the Malay World* 44, no. 130 (September 1, 2016), 285-306.

<sup>5</sup> M. Hamid Algadri, *Islam dan Keturunan Arab dalam Pemberontakan Melawan Belanda* (Jakarta: Mizan, 1996).

<sup>6</sup> Natalie Mobini-Kesheh, "The Arab Periodicals of the Netherlands East Indies, 1914-1942," *Bijdragen tot de taal-, land- en volkenkunde/Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences of Southeast Asia* 152, no. 2 (1996), 236-256.

drami community arrived in the land of Osing for centuries, they gained popularity in terms of rituals, religious practices, and their native language, particularly *ṣalawāt* and Arabic music. Several literature reviews on Indonesian-Hadramis have not provided comprehensive studies on the coexistence of Hadramis living in the land of Osing. There are several research questions raised in this study. How do the Hadramis and Osing communities transmit on a social, cultural, and religious extent? What are the means that Hadramis embody local culture in the land of Osing? Based on relevant theories, data collection and analysis will be conducted using these two research questions as a basis.

This qualitative research is aimed into anthropological approach.<sup>7</sup> The author conducted in-depth observations and interviews with a number of Hadrami families in the land of Osing during fieldwork for the research project. In addition, the author analyzed literature reviews on relevant studies from books, journals, magazines, and linked document sources, including online and offline newspaper as secondary data. The author employed analytical links upon one piece of information or piece of data to another in order to draw a conclusion. This method has significance for providing an answer to the leading hypothesis.

## **Embodiment and Hadrami Diaspora**

Embodiment theory is an anthropological concept that focuses on cultural structures in society rather than the body as an object. Anthropologically, embodiment is a paradigm for understanding, accepting, adapting, and even practices and habits in interpreting the reality of social and cultural structures. Csordas stated that gesture, emotional expression, and language are of a piece in being superimpositions of a human world on a natural or biological world.<sup>8</sup> Strathern and Steward argued that in a further theoretical

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<sup>7</sup> John W. Creswell and Cheryl N. Poth, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing among Five Approaches* (USA: Sage publications, 2016); Scott Reeves, Ayelet Kuper, and Brian David Hodges, "Qualitative Research Methodologies: Ethnography," *British Medical Journal* 337, no. 7668 (2013), 512-514; Bojan Žikić, "Qualitative Field Research in Anthropology: An Overview of Basic Research Methodology," *Issues in Ethnology and Anthropology* 2, no. 2 (2007), 123-135.

<sup>8</sup> Thomas J. Csordas, "Embodiment as a Paradigm for Anthropology," *American Anthropological Association* 18, no. 1 (1990), 5-47.

step there is a need to set embodiment back into the larger contexts of society and culture to it belongs.<sup>9</sup> The concept and theory of embodiment are part of gender and feminism studies in addition to being a paradigm of social structure, culture, and religion.<sup>10</sup> Social, cultural, economic, political, and religious realities shape how the body is constructed. The scholarship of body across time and culture proves that gender categories are socially and culturally constructed.<sup>11</sup> These theories and arguments are important for understanding how Hadrami community experiences embodiment transmission within the context of Osing's social and cultural structures.

Ian Walker's study mentioned social character of Hadrami diaspora is unique. Wherever they travel, they will not completely leave behind the legacy, customs, and the local culture. Walker categorized Hadrami diaspora model into four groups. The first is intra-diaspora, which means that the Hadrami people only engage with their fellow clans in economics, trade, marriage, and religious rites in order to maintain their identity. The second is trans-diaspora. This sort of diaspora suggests that Hadrami groups create social, economic, and religious relationships with Hadramis from other clans. This is implemented so that people can communicate their values with one another. The third type is homeland-diasporic, which refers to Hadrami people who left their homeland for another country but returned to establish business, marry, or retire. Fourth, hostland-diasporic refers to Hadrami people who adapt to the native community where they migrate.<sup>12</sup>

Alatas intensively studied the history of Hadrami migration in archipelago. It is stated that socio-political connections, economy, and religious components all have an impact on shaping Hadrami's

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<sup>9</sup> Pamela J. Stewart and Andrew Strathern, "Embodiment Theory in Performance and Performativity," *Journal of Ritual Studies* 22, no. 1 (2008), 67-71, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/44368783>.

<sup>10</sup> Gabe Ignatow, "Embodiment and Culture," in *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences: Second Edition*, ed. James D. Wright (N.p.: Elsevier, 2015), 415-419; Dov Cohen and Angela K.Y. Leung, "The Hard Embodiment of Culture," *European Journal of Social Psychology* 39, no. 7 (2009), 1278-1289.

<sup>11</sup> Stephanie Y Mitchem, "Embodiment, Gender, and Re-Ligion," *CrossCurrents* 68, nno. 4 (2018), 550-560.

<sup>12</sup> Iain Walker, *The Hadrami Diaspora: A "Diaspora For Others" In The Indian Ocean*, *Journal of Indian Ocean World Studies* 4, no. 2 (2021), 188-211.

identity, particularly in Java.<sup>13</sup> In addition to commerce and economic missions, Hadrami migration enhanced spiritual movements like the *ṭariqah ‘alawīyah* spreading over the archipelago. Hadramis and Chinese were thought to have an impact on trade and economic competition during the Dutch East Indies’ history.

Hadramis, on the other hand, face a number of political identity issues in Indonesia’s modern era due to their Arab heritage. Furthermore, Arabness is frequently mentioned in debates on the future of Islam, where Arabization is portrayed as a threat to Islam Nusantara.<sup>14</sup> According to Hoogervorst, the Hadramis roots of militant Muslims like Abu Bakar Ba’asyir, Ja’far Umar Thalib, and Muhammad Rizieq Shihab are populist Hadramis with a significant political impact in Indonesia. This demonstrates how the Hadrami diaspora and Middle Eastern political influence are inextricably linked. In particular, the phenomenon of Islamism and Arab relations has recently emerged as a populist political movement in Muslim-majority countries like Indonesia. In Muslim countries like Jordan (Islamic Action Front, a party based on the Muslim Brotherhood), Algeria (Islamic Salvation Front), Turkey (Refah party), and Egypt (Muslim Brotherhood party), religious populism has emerged as the new global favorite when these parties win electoral votes.<sup>15</sup>

Hadrami diaspora in Indonesia experienced obstacles in term of economic and political conflicts with Chinese, as well as native communities where they live. The Dutch East Indies divided Hadramis from other ethnic groups and established an Arab village. This represents the integration of Hadrami identities such as Betawi Arab, Sundanese Arab, Sumatran Arab, Javanese Arab, and so on. In addition to their social, cultural, economic, and political roles, Hadramis have helped to develop social foundations for Islamic education in Indonesia, such as Jamiat Kheir. Jamiat Kheir

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<sup>13</sup> Ismail Fajrie Alatas, “Land of the Sacred, Land of the Damned: Conceptualizing Homeland among the Upholders of the Thariqah ‘Alawīyah in Indonesia,” *Antropologi Indonesia* 29, no. 2 (2005), 142-158.

<sup>14</sup> Tom Hoogervorst, “Hadrami Mobilities, Colonial Histories, and Southeast Asia,” *Bijdragen tot de taal-, land- en volkenkunde/Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences of Southeast Asia* 177, no. 2-3 (July 10, 2021), 395-402.

<sup>15</sup> Amanah Nurish, “Populisme Agama dalam Pentas Demokrasi Indonesia di Era Internet,” in *Demokrasi di Era Digital*, ed. Nasir Tamara (Jakarta: Yayasan Obor Indonesia, 2021), 423-437.

was the first modern system of education as the precursor of contemporary Islamic education in Indonesia. In 1901, Hadrami community was motivated by the Islamic reformation movement led by Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī and the Islamic reformation led by Muḥammad ‘Abduh in Egypt to establish Jamiat Kheir as a social organization.<sup>16</sup>

Endogamy in the kinship system and *sekuifu*’ or *kafa’ah* marriage are practiced by the majority of Hadrami community. Hadramis have a patrilineal culture and kinship system in general. Most of Hadrami women in the land of Osing are on arranged marriage within their circle. This Hadrami ritual later became gender issue and socio-cultural construction of Hadrami women. Sayyid community in Hadramaut addressed the issue of *kafa’ah* in the selection of a prospective husband for Hadrami women, based on Islamic principles that emphasize the concept of *sekuifu*’ (compatible), in which the prospective husband of Hadrami women must be socially equal to the women, which means that his social status is not lower than that of their prospective wife.<sup>17</sup> The case of Hadramaut demonstrates how gender is culturally and historically distinctive, drawn by the ‘juridical system of power’ and performed by the constituted subjects.<sup>18</sup>

### Islam in the Land of Osing and Cultural Transmission

The land of Osing is geographically close to Bali. The features of society, culture, religion, and economy are intermingled together.<sup>19</sup> This town is well renowned as a natural wonderland surrounded by ocean, mountains, and forests. The economic resources are dominantly in the sectors of agricultural and forest industries such as coffee, rubber, and cocoa. The land of Osing has a Muslim population of 96.4%. While Hindu and Buddhist popula-

<sup>16</sup> Y. Z. Shahab, “Exploring Uniting Factor for Multiculturalism Policy: Portrait of Hadrami, Arab Community in Indonesia,” *KnE Social Sciences* 3, no. 10 (August 29, 2018), 650–680.

<sup>17</sup> Imam Subchi, “Kafa’ah among the Hadrami Arabs in the Malay World; Anthropology of Law Approach,” *Jurnal Cita Hukum* 8, no. 2 (August 1, 2020), 415-434.

<sup>18</sup> Ismail Fajrie Alatas, “Gender and Hadrami Migration,” *Indonesian Feminist* 3, no. 1 (2015), 4-13.

<sup>19</sup> Soetoko et. al., *Geografi Dialek Banyuwangi* (Jakarta: Pusat Pembinaan dan Pengembangan Bahasa, 1981).

tion are minority groups, these two religions have become two of the most important in the history of Blambangan kingdom. Hadrami community has formed close social, cultural, and religious relation with the Muslim majority population. However, the establishment of Islam in this town was closely linked to Hadramaut migrants during the reign of the Regent of Pringgokusumo in the early 18th century, a Hadrami scholar (Sayyid Datuk Abdurahim Bauzir) was assigned to establish Islam in the land of Osing.

According to Hasyim, Abdurahim Bauzir arrived in archipelago and he came to Blambangan or the land of Osing<sup>20</sup> as a transit point before traveling to Malay communities, Loloan, and Jemberana—Bali for Islamic *da'wah*.<sup>21</sup> In addition to commerce and education, the expansion of Islam by Hadrami community has been related through marriage of native people. Some Hadramis married native women where they expanded an Islamic *da'wah*. Marriage with native people in the land of Osing was only possible for men, but women should marry with Hadrami descent in order to retain their ethnicity, culture, and custom. Alatas has an intriguing point of view on this matter. He argues that such a strategy helped to integrate local kinship structures while still allowing them to retain their distinctness through properly established lines of descent.<sup>22</sup> Marriages between Hadramis and natives in the land of Osing gave birth to an ethnic group known as “Mixed Arabs, Javanese Arabs, or Osing Arabs.”

In terms of religious organization, most of Hadramis in the land of Osing are affiliated with traditionalist organization such as Nahdhatul Ulama (NU). After reformation some of them also joined the Islamic Defender Front (Front Pembela Islam/FPI) before this organization was banned by Joko Widodo's regime. The Al-Khairiyah denomination is typically the group with close ties to traditionalist organization or NU. Indeed, Muslim community in the land of Osing in their daily religious rituals are linked to the influence of Hadramis' role for religious practice. This describes cultural adaption process that occurred between Hadrami and native community. Ceremonial recitations, such as religious speech in

<sup>20</sup> Much. Hasyim, “Jejak Bangsa Arab di Banyuwangi,” *Ringtimesbanyuwangi.Com*.

<sup>21</sup> Rossi Prima Yunita, *Banyuwangi dalam Mozaik* (Banyuwangi: CV. Al Fastabiq Al Khairat and Komunitas Pecinta Sejarah Blambangan [Koseba], 2013).

<sup>22</sup> Ismail Fajrie Alatas, “Becoming Indonesians: The Bā ‘Alawī in the Interstices of the Nation,” *Welt Des Islams* 51, no. 1 (2011), 45-108.

mosques, have a characteristic in which the presence of Hadramis or habibs has always been a commodity of religious activities in the land of Osing.

During my interview with Hadramis, one of the important Hadrami figure delivered his long story within his family that his grandfather had left Hadramawt and sailed to the land of Osing. He had multiple jobs, as a businessman and a preacher. His father worked very hard, collected money and charities among Hadramis until he could build a big mosque. Habib Hadi is a notable Hadrami character in the land of Osing or Blambangan (1908-1973). He was a well known a great spiritual leader with thousands of followers not only in the land of Osing but also Bali and other Java regions. As businessman, he sold textiles at traditional markets, known as Banyuwangi's "old town." Habib Hadi was very close to the native people and became a prominent master due to he was intellectually able to adapt with the social and cultural character in the land of Osing. His contribution to the growth of Islamic *da'wah* in the land of Osing was significant. After he passed away in 1973 with one son and seven daughters, his son continues his legacy to expand Islamic *da'wah*.

Hadrami community in the land of Osing, like most Arab villages, has two major institutions, Al-Khairiyah and Al-Irsyad, both of which focus on social and religious education. Al-Irshad is a more modern Islamic organization that does not apply to the Prophet's *manlid*, *tarekat*, *ḥawl*, and other ceremonies such as Al-Khairiyah. The primary *da'wah* of Al-Irshad schools is more purifying of Islamic teachings. Islamic education and the role of Hadramis in the land of Osing cannot be distinguished from political circumstances. For some reason, political interests are conspiring against Hadrami's identity. Like in other lands of archipelago, religion plays important role for native people in the land of Osing. Religion, as Foucault's point of view, is the most prominent aspect of hegemonic power that plays into social structures. Religions thus become the most finely tuned examples of power structures.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Mark Haugaard, "Foucault and Power: A Critique and Retheorization," *Critical Review* 34, no. 3-4 (2022), 341-371; Jürgen Portschy, "Times of Power, Knowledge and Critique in the Work of Foucault," *Time and Society* 29, no. 2 (2020), 392-419; Santiago Castro-Gómez, Kyle Kopsick, and David Golding, "Michel Foucault and the Coloniality of Power," *Cultural Studies* 37, no. 3 (2023), 444-460.

The ability of religions to exert control over human lives in order to establish social, economic, cultural norms and values, as well as political stability for its members/followers, drives social structure and power relations. In terms of religion and politics, Hadramis were given a special space in the land of Osing since the beginning of their settlement, which supports social and economic structure.

In addition, Hadramis performed significant influence in the land of Osing by expanding religious traditions into Arabic music and art. These can be described as the model of an Islamic acculturation. It is common among Hadrami community to create music as a strategy of communication, and this is an example of Islamic acculturation that occurs in specific cultural spaces.<sup>24</sup> Music is a form of acculturation between Hadrami and native people for the dissemination of Islamic *da'wah*.<sup>25</sup> Arabic music such as *gambus* has a great impact and influence for native people in the land of Osing. *Ṣalawāt* and *hadrah* are typically used to commemorate events like the Prophet's *manlid*, marriage, circumcision, and religious ceremonies. Hadramis promoted Arabic music as an Islamic *da'wah* instrument in the land of Osing. In contrast to Sunan Kalijaga during his Islamic *da'wah*, he immersed himself into Javanese traditional music such as *gamelan*, *gendhing*, and *wayang* (puppet).<sup>26</sup> Instead of adopting local culture in the land of Osing, Hadrami community more promote Arabic music and their culture. Osing ethnic music and culture such as *kendang kempul* or *gandrung* are not common among Hadrami community. Although Hadramis adapted to native people in the land of Osing in terms of local language, they are still unwilling to accept Osing ethnic music. Recently, the cultural embodiment in the land of Osing has begun to change the content of music and songs to include more Arabic nuance.

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<sup>24</sup> Masdar Hilmy, "Islam and Javanese Acculturation: Textual and Contextual Analysis of the Slametan Ritual," *ProQuest Dissertations and Theses*, 1999, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/304560165?accountid=28431>; Muhammad Khairil, Raisa Alatas, Fadhlia Basir, Mirfath Alamrie, "Communication Strategy in the Islamic Acculturation Process by the Hadramaut-Arab Descendants in Palu," *Asian Journal of Environment, History and Heritage* 2, no. 2 (2018), 249-256.

<sup>25</sup> Yunita, *Banyuwangi dalam Mozaik*.

<sup>26</sup> Traditional music and art performance, these are well-known from Balinese and Javanese culture.

## The Descendent of Prophet

Hadramis entered the land of Osing through two main routes; trade and marriage lines. In 1866, the Dutch divided the land of Osing based on ethnicity so that both Hadramis and Chinese community had to live in certain villages with only their own ethnic group. Hadramis competed with ethnic Chinese community on commerce. Chinese's skill on commerce in Southeast Asia has been associated with migrant's network.<sup>27</sup> The presence of Hadramis and Chinese in the land of Osing was a competition, thus their existence was divided based on territory that could be easily controlled by the Dutch East Indies. It is necessary to note that in 1885 the number of Hadramis in the land of Osing was 356. It consisted of 84 men, 25 women and 247 children born in this land. Hadramis arrived in the land of Osing via Ulupampang port, which is now known as Muncar Subdistrict.<sup>28</sup>

The Hadrami population in the land of Osing is increasing from time to time. There are currently thousands of Hadramis from different social and economic background. Some of them are business owners. However, the large percentage of Hadramis has been working for religious education and preachers. Hadramis in the land of Osing have built Islamic boarding schools or *pesantren*. Before being brought to Yemen, children must be educated by their *pesantren*. In addition to develop Islamic education, Hadrami community in the land of Osing built schools such as al-Irshad, which began in 1927. This educational institution has contributed to the growth of Islamic *da'wah* in this land. However, the Hadrami community's efforts to develop Islamic education were largely successful.

Hadrami community, on the other hand, are viewed as respected social class for native people of the land of Osing, despite the fact that they are inclusive in terms of habit, culture, language, and custom. Berg stated that the politics of separation between Hadramis and natives impedes the process of assimilation. Different from Berg, Jacobsen (2009) had stated that:

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<sup>27</sup> Gabriel J. Felbermayr, Benjamin Jung, and Farid Toubal, "Ethnic Networks, Information, and International Trade: Revisiting the Evidence," *Annals of Economics and Statistics*, no. 97/98 (2010), 41-70.

<sup>28</sup> Ika Ningtyas, "Ekspedisi Kampung Arab di Banyuwangi," *Tempo*, 2013, <https://travel.tempo.co/read/498664/ekspedisi-kampung-arab-di-banyuwangi>.

Hadrami diaspora groups clearly have been influenced by their host societies both socially and culturally, the Hadrami societies are not to be viewed as passive receivers of outside influences or as representing a passive adaptation to their new living conditions. Hadrami in Indonesia still maintain some unique Hadrami customs and identify themselves as Hadrami, the degree to which they have become assimilated into the general Muslim population.<sup>29</sup>

The assimilation of Hadramis and natives in the land of Osing can be indicated through at least three factors: (1) religious symbols (2) marriage and language (3) social and economic structure. These three factors need to be embodied in the context of Hadrami and native people. Native people in the land of Osing believe that Hadramis are descendants of the Prophet Muḥammad. They believe that Hadramis must have a higher spiritual level in order to connect their prayers with transcendental life. Many people regard Hadramis as a saint with a religious authority in spiritual guidance. According to Tisdell, “spirituality has to do with a personal belief and experience of a higher power or higher purpose”.<sup>30</sup> Native people in the land of Osing also believe that *Wali Songo* (Nine Saints) were spiritual leaders who were also Hadramis. In the local context, they are so called as *Wali Songo* as a great symbol of Islamic and Javanese mysticism. According to Koentjaraningrat, mystical aspects of Islam are significant in Javanese culture. Furthermore, Javanese people practice Islam in a range of ways, some of which are influenced by Hindu traditions.<sup>31</sup> All of these assumptions and beliefs shape how local communities in the land of Osing in treating, interacting, and respecting the Hadrami community as descendants of the Prophet Muḥammad.

## Religious Costumes and Symbols

Throughout Indonesia’s modern political history, symbols have become very important and synonymous with power. This

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<sup>29</sup> Frode F. Jacobsen, *Hadrami Arabs in Present-Day Indonesia: An Indonesia-Oriented Group with an Arab Signature* (New York: Routledge, 2009).

<sup>30</sup> Jon C. Dalton, “Exploring Spirituality and Culture in Adult and Higher Education,” *Journal of College Student Development* 44, no. 6 (2003), 861-863.

<sup>31</sup> Koentjaraningrat, *Ritus Peralihan di Indonesia* (Jakarta: Balai Pustaka, 1993).

includes the role of religious symbols in political contestation.<sup>32</sup> The Interpretation of Cultures written by Geertz leads to my point of view that symbols, displayed in actions, can exist both in culture as well as religion. Geertz employs a class approach, cultural symbols, and meaning in religious practices.<sup>33</sup> By using Geertz's analysis, I perceive that there is behavior of society in expressing religiosity through symbolic actions.<sup>34</sup> In the interpretive anthropology, for example, a symbol can be defined as anything drawn as an action, a practice, an object, a sequence of noises, a cremation ceremony, or social gathering of people to share a meal to build social cohesion. However, Geertz have seen the goal of interpretive analysis as spelling out the implicit or unstated presuppositions, implications, or "meanings" (the goals, values, and world pictures) that make this or that action, practice, object, or pattern of sound intelligible to members of some culture or interpretive community in some specific context.<sup>35</sup>

The most striking example is the symbol of clothing and costumes of Hadramis or habibs with their characteristic. Long dress and headgear are always worn by habibs, especially when performing religious activities and rituals. Their all-white costumes and traditions have particular meaning and symbols. As in everyday life, symbols are not only understood as mediation to convey a certain message, it is composing the epistemology and beliefs that have been embraced.<sup>36</sup> In this context, symbols are perceived as a process of interaction between humans. According to Herbert Blumer symbols are process of interpretation in which humans define each

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<sup>32</sup> Amanah Nurish, "Nasib 'Agama' Lokal di Tengah Ancaman Populisme," in *Agama, Kebudayaan, dan Rekonsiliasi* (Depok: Desantara, 2021), 233-246.

<sup>33</sup> Amanah Nurish, *Agama Jawa: Setengah Abad Pasca-Clifford Geertz* (Yogyakarta: LKiS, 2019).

<sup>34</sup> Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York: Basic Books, 1973).

<sup>35</sup> Armin W. Geertz, "The Meaningful Brain: Clifford Geertz and the Cognitive Science of Culture," in *Mental Culture: Classical Social Theory and the Cognitive Science of Religion*, eds. Dimitris Xygalatas and William W. McCorkle Jr (Durham: Acumen, 2012); Richard A. Shweder and Séamus A. Powera, "Robust Cultural Pluralism: An Interview with Professor Richard A. Shweder," *Europe's Journal of Psychology* 9, no. 4 (2013), 671-686.

<sup>36</sup> Soerjono Soekanto, *Teori Sosiologi: Suatu Pengantar* (Jakarta. Ghalia Indonesia, 2002).

other on their actions.<sup>37</sup> The dress identified as Middle Eastern culture is not merely custom, but it is part of a symbol that has its own meaning. The dress style of *habibs* is a symbol of their cultural identity of Hadramis, in addition to the meaning of white color also shows the symbol of piety and purity.

However, native people in the land of Osing who adore *habibs* have recently imitated the way of wearing costume. Those with the title “*habib*” traditionally wore long dress. This attire is becoming increasingly popular among non-Hadrami religious leaders from native Osing. It has evolved into a dress style for those who have performed Hajj or studied in the Middle Eastern countries. However, non-Hadramis in the land of Osing are now wearing *habib*-style clothing, particularly religious leaders and students from Islamic boarding schools or *pesantrens*. Those who dress in *habib*-style primarily purchase their costumes while on pilgrimage for hajj, or those who study in Middle Eastern countries like Jordan, Egypt, Hadramwt, or Saudi used to establish a business in the land of Osing by selling *habib* outfits such as long dresses (*daster* in Javanese costume). On the one hand, it is a business opportunity for Hadrami community to sell fashion products. When people dress like *habib*, they are labeled as “piety,” and their look, including dress, will have its own sign.

Furthermore, Hadrami’s dress style becomes a religious commodity as a symbolic power and meaning. Bowman proposed that this example shows significant role in commercialization, or the application of a market-oriented approach to the study of religion.<sup>38</sup> Arab foods, drinks, carpets, herbal treatments, and perfume are examples of Hadrami culture impact in the land of Osing. In this context, there are cultural, religious, and economic ties. Religion as a commodity provides economic benefits to Hadrami community. As Weber’s points of view, religion and economics are inextricably linked. Berger suggested that Weber’s view on protestant ethics and the spirit of capitalism profoundly influenced the relationship between religion and economic theories based on

<sup>37</sup> Steve Bruce and Herbert Blumer, “Symbolic Interactionism: Perspective and Method,” *The British Journal of Sociology* 39, no. 2 (1988), 292-295.

<sup>38</sup> Marion Bowman, “Valuing Spirituality: Commodification, Consumption and Community in Glastonbury,” in *Religion in Consumer Society: Brands, Consumers and Markets*, eds. Tuomas Martikainen and François Gauthier (London: Routledge, 2016).

social structure. He rationally supported Weber's argument for such a significant link between religion and economy, finding the same trend throughout Latin America.<sup>39</sup> According to Berger, Protestants profit from a prosperity gospel that associates financial success with heavenly favor.<sup>40</sup> This also happened with Hadrami community's embodiment in the land of Osing in terms of religious symbol and commerce. However, Hadrami communities in Indonesia have largely achieved success in commerce, political movement, education, and religion.<sup>41</sup>

### Arabic Language

In addition to rituals, meals, and costumes, Arabic language is used in the embodiment process between Hadrami community and native people in the land of Osing. Arabic has grown in popularity among native people especially in the last few decades. This is due not only to the fact that all Islamic teachings and ceremonies are delivered in Arabic language, but also to the considerable influence of cultural and social communication between Hadrami and native people. Even when it comes to give name for children, Arab names are popular among native people in the land of Osing. Native people used to invite *habibs* to recommend names for their babies during birth ceremonies or *slametan*. The native of Osing believe that *habib's* role in naming their children for the sake of blessings is significant. Since the late nineteenth century, typical Arab names have become popular not only in the land of Osing but throughout the Indonesian archipelago as the identity of Prophet Muhammad's followers. This distinguishes *santri* and *abangan*, which have distinct non-Arab names.

However, Geertz's study of *abangan* is often understood as individuals who do not obey the Islamic laws or shariah and the customs of *santri*. Hefner argued that *abangan* was a non-standard Is-

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<sup>39</sup> Galen Watts and Dick Houtman, "The Spiritual Turn and the Disenchantment of the World: Max Weber, Peter Berger and the Religion-Science Conflict," *Sociological Review* 71, no. 1 (2023), 261-279.

<sup>40</sup> Noma Bar, "Religion and Economics: The Holy Relevance," *The Economist Newspaper*, October 29, 2011.

<sup>41</sup> Jacobsen, *Hadrami Arabs in Present-Day Indonesia*.

lam.<sup>42</sup> *Abangan* can be seen as a critique of the bureaucratic aspects of the structure and power relations within the *santri* and feudal society. *Abangan* can be related to the hierarchical system of *santri* and *priyayi* as a counter-part of the Javanese people, particularly farmers and lower middle-class people or *wong cilik*.<sup>43</sup> *Abangan* likes to blend Islam with indigenous cultures, such as grave pilgrimages, *slametan* ceremonies, and other cultural syncretic elements. In fact, Islam's syncretism with the Javanese culture is still accepted by traditionalist *santri*.<sup>44</sup> In addition to adopt Arab culture, there are social phenomena among native people of Osing in calling, greeting, and communicating by expressing Arabic words. Native people in the land of Osing who are familiar with *habib* community use Arabic terms for communication and social engagement. Religious and economic reasons, in my opinion, are the two main reasons why native people in the land of Osing are attracted to the Hadrami community.

### Women's Role in Hadrami Community

Speaking about Hadramis in the land of Osing also reflects gender issues, particularly those affecting women in their community. Women's rights among Hadramis have recently come under fire. Women in Hadrami culture are always positioned in the domestic sphere in their traditions and religious doctrines, or even for the sake of Islam in many ways. According to a survey of gender injustice and women issues in the Arab world, Yemen (Hadramawt) was ranked fifth after Egypt, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, and Syria. This type of male domination is thought to be a particularly pernicious form of patriarchy, not only relegating women to second-class citizens but also sanctioning violence against women in the name of culture and religion.

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<sup>42</sup> Robert W. Hefner, "Where Have All the Abangan Gone?: Religionization and the Decline of Nonstandard Islam in Contemporary Indonesia," in *The Politics of Religion in Indonesia: Syncretism, Orthodoxy, and Religious Contention in Java and Bali*, eds. Michel Picard and Rémy Madinier (London: Routledge, 2011), 71-91.

<sup>43</sup> Amanah Nurish, "Santri and Abangan after a Half Century of Clifford Geertz," *Jurnal Ilmiah Islam Futura* 21, no. 2 (August 2021), 226-239.

<sup>44</sup> Amanah Nurish, "When Abangan Embraces Sufism: Religious Phenomenology to Counter Radicalism in Contemporary Java," *Teosofi: Jurnal Tasawuf dan Pemikiran Islam* 11, no. 1 (2021), 20-45.

Women's domestication has become their culture in the Hadrami tradition. During my fieldwork in the Arab village of the land of Osing, I discovered only few Hadrami women continue to pursue higher education. Most Hadrami women are culturally domesticated at their home to serve husbands. Even when they leave their home, Hadrami women rarely travel alone unless accompanied by their brothers, sons, or husbands. This cultural habit is common among Hadrami women because their husbands provide household needs and they do not need to go to market or public spaces by themselves. They often quote al-Nisa [4]: 34, "*al-rijāl qawwāmūn ‘alā al-nisā’*" which means 'men are the protectors and maintainers of women.' This verse has always been the reason why men in Hadrami's culture are always dominant in their role rather than women especially in public sphere.

Although the land of Osing or Banyuwangi is a small town, women role is more advanced and modern in term of culture and economy. Women used to work in public spaces, pursue higher education, build career in politics, arts, education and intellectualism, or run business. Women in the land of Osing are culturally forced to be more independent and tough. In the land of Osing, this is common for women to have role in public spaces. However, this does not happen yet to Hadrami women because they are very strong in their adherence to Arab traditions and culture, which restrict women in public space. Unfortunately, this tradition has spread to Islamic education institutions such as Islamic boarding schools or *pesantren*. The presence of *pesantren*, where the educational system and curriculum adopt from Middle Eastern cultures, is one of the Arab influences. Although the curriculum in many *pesantren* adopted from Arab culture are very traditional and deeply impact the ways of thinking.<sup>45</sup> Hadrami women's religious, cultural, social, and economic lives in the land of Osing contrast with one another, but in terms of gender, they remain very strong, with Arab culture and customs supporting female domestication.

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<sup>45</sup> Amanah Nurish, "Women's Same-Sex Relations in Indonesian Pesantren," *Gender, Technology and Development* 14, no. 2 (2010), 267-277.

## Conclusion

Previous studies on Hadrami community in Indonesia, particularly in the Osing land, revealed that Hadramis allied with the Dutch East Indies for political advantage. The Hadrami community had opportunity for commerce and religious missionary activities, despite not holding government administrative positions in the Dutch East Indies. The historical record indicated that whenever there was a conflict between native and Dutch people, Hadramis were always on the side of the Dutch East Indies. This narrative is distinct from the relationship between Hadrami and Dutch people in several regions, including Sulawesi, where both sides were more in opposition. This distinguishes Hadramis' history in the land of Osing, which was a relatively harmonious, in past connections to Chinese community and Dutch person. Hadrami relations with Dutch people in the Sulawesi region had been fraught with political tensions and conflicts over religious identity, particularly at the end of the nineteenth century. Meanwhile in the land of Osing, there were no political conflicts unless it happened Perang Puputan Bayu in 1743. The 19<sup>th</sup> century in the land of Osing was peaceful town among others although there were riots in some regions including Bali. The European, Meistizo, Kreole, Chinese, Arab, Mandar, Bugis, Malay, and indigenous Osing communities were socially and structurally formed. The formation of community members among the ethnic groups in the land of Osing strengthened the ethnic composition even more.<sup>46</sup>

For political reasons, the Dutch East Indies bestowed the highest title and social status upon Hadrami community. Despite living with native people in the land of Osing for many centuries, Hadrami community remains very strong in their Arab culture and traditions, particularly women's roles in domestic and public life. This study found that native people in the land of Osing adopted Arab culture and religious practices influenced by Hadrami community. Geographical separation of Hadrami community and native people in the land of Osing during Dutch East Indies did not

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<sup>46</sup> Banyuwangi Connect, "Perkembangan Penduduk dan Perubahan Formasi Etnis di Blambangan Tahun 1800an," *Kumparan*, [https://kumparan.com/banyuwangi\\_connect/perkembangan-penduduk-dan-perubahan-formasi-etnis-di-blambangan-tahun-1800an-oleh-s-marga-1537509134419125161/3](https://kumparan.com/banyuwangi_connect/perkembangan-penduduk-dan-perubahan-formasi-etnis-di-blambangan-tahun-1800an-oleh-s-marga-1537509134419125161/3) (accessed July 23, 2023).

fully support the process of cultural assimilation. Indeed, Hadrami community has been engaging in their livelihood activities such as commerce and religious *da'wah* using local language and cultural approach as part of their assimilation into the land of Osing. In conclusion, the religious and cultural transmission between the indigenous people of Osing and Hadrami community demonstrate how Arab culture has been assimilated and imitated, and how its influence has grown throughout history. This can be seen in the increased commerce and business on tourism in Arab countries including umrah, fashion, perfume, or foods, language, and education that become more common in the land of Osing. Then what can the Hadrami community adopt from the Osing community? They learn Javanese culture, especially the exotic beauty of women who dance *gandrung*.

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## **2. Interviews**

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