

## Contesting Religion and Ethnicity in Madurese Society

**Akhmad Siddiq**

Indonesian Consortium for Religious Studies (ICRS), Yogyakarta  
shidiq987@yahoo.com

**Fatimah Husein**

State Islamic University of Sunan Kalijaga, Yogyakarta  
fatimahhusein@yahoo.com

**Leonard C. Epafra**

Christian University of Duta Wacana (UKDW), Yogyakarta  
leonard.epafra@mail.ugm.ac.id

### Abstract

This article describes historical phases of Madurese identity construction, the origins of Madurese ethnicity, inter-ethnic and inter-cultural relation, Madurese *Pendalungan* culture, and how Islam involves into cultural identities of the Madurese. In this paper, I will argue that Islam has become part of cultural values of the Madurese, that is, embedded within traditional activities and local wisdom. However, the involvement does not mean to exclude other “non-Islamic” and “non-Madurese” tradition in the process of construing Madurese identity. By exploring how Madurese identity was culturally constructed, someone could draw more visible connection between religion, tradition, and social identity. This paper illustrates how Madurese identity culturally produced, nurtured and matured. Since identity is a way of perceiving, interpreting, and representing the existence of people, I persist that Madurese identity has also been produced and reproduced depending on the political, social,

and cultural situation. In this regard, inter-religious or inter-ethnic relation remains essential.

[Artikel ini menjelaskan fase terbentuknya identitas orang-orang Madura, asal-usul etnis, hubungan lintas-budaya dan antaretnis, budaya *Pendalungan*, dan bagaimana Islam berinteraksi dengan identitas budaya orang Madura. Dalam artikel ini saya menegaskan bahwa Islam telah menjadi bagian tak terpisahkan dari nilai-nilai budaya Madura, yang bisa dilihat dari dalam aktivitas sosial dan kearifan lokal orang Madura. Meski demikian, hal ini tidak menafikan bahwa tradisi “non-Islam” atau “non-Madura” juga memiliki peran dalam proses pembentukan identitas Madura. Dengan mengurai proses konstruksi identitas sosial Madura, seseorang bisa melihat dengan lebih jelas hubungan erat antara agama, tradisi, dan identitas sosial. Artikel ini juga menggambarkan bagaimana identitas Madura diproduksi, dikembangkan, dan dilestarikan. Sebab identitas adalah sebuah persepsi, interpretasi, dan representasi, artikel ini menyimpulkan bahwa identitas Madura pun tidak lepas dari tahapan itu: bergantung pada kondisi politik, sosial, ekonomi dan budaya. Dalam konteks ini, relasi antaragama dan antaretnis menjadi sangat penting.]

**Keywords:** ethnicity, identity, Islam, Madurese.

*“Madura is not an island, but an ocean of knowledge.”*  
(Zawawi Imron, 2017)<sup>1</sup>

## Introduction

When I visited Jakarta for the first time in 1998, a friend of mine from the city asked me curiously, “Are you Madurese? I didn’t hear your Madurese dialect when you are speaking in Bahasa. It is unexpected.” I just smiled at him. At the time, even I did not honestly realize that people would identify my social identity through my accent. To some extent, it was logical because Madurese dialect at the time has become

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<sup>1</sup> He is a Madurese poet who wrote many issues relating to Madura and Madurese culture. Among his writing are *Semberbak Mayang* (1977), *Celurit Emas* (1980), *Bulan Tertusuk Ilalang* (1982), *Raden Sagoro* (1984), *Madura Akulah Darahmu* (1999), and *Mata Badik Mata Puisi* (2012). He achieved many awards, e.g. The S.E.A Write Award.

one of the great parodied enunciations among comedians of television-series. We might mention here at least two persons: *Buk*<sup>2</sup> Bariah<sup>3</sup> and Kadir.<sup>4</sup> Through their Madurese-like dialect, people could quickly identify the figure of Buk Bariah and Kadir as Madurese, even not every Madurese obtained that kind of lingo. Until today that personal experience has occasionally returned to me.

Since many people have their commonsense of Madurese identity, such experience also happened to many other Madurese people living within the non-Madurese community. Commonly, stereotypes of Madurese involved in dialect, character, attitude, and vocation.<sup>5</sup> Muthmainnah, in his book *Jembatan Suramadu: Respon Ulama terhadap Industrialisasi*, A Suramadu Bridge: An 'Ulamā's Response to Industrialization, shared the same story: her friends hardly believed that she was from Madura and her parent were not *sate* or *soto* vender, nor a barber. She wrote about her Madurese friend's story where the Javanese student at his university insisted that he was not Madurese because his skin was lightly white and his body was not firm.<sup>6</sup> In today's Indonesia, we may highlight a political and judicial figure easily identified as a Madurese representative from his dialect: Muhammad Mahfud MD for instance.<sup>7</sup> This phenomenon reveals that some non-Madurese people tend to identify Madurese through visible and discernable entities.

Stereotypes of Madurese people, culturally acknowledged as their identity marker, had been traditionally embodied and embedded until today. Stereotypes contain knowledge, belief, and expectation about a social group, and they have been rooted in standard and ubiquitous

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<sup>2</sup> *Buk* is Madurese language used to call matured woman, similar to *Ibu* in Indonesian language.

<sup>3</sup> She is one of the prominent characters in the movie of *Film Si Unyil* (broadcasted in TVRI between 1981 and 1993).

<sup>4</sup> He is a comedian known as Madurese person (although he is actually not) who inherited Madurese dialect in his performance. Among his movies are *Kanan Kiri Oke* (1989), *Ikkut-ikutan* (1990), "Salah Pencet" (1992), "Kapan di Luar Kapan di Dalam" (1995), and "Ngebut Kawin" (2010).

<sup>5</sup> Read Huub De Jonge, "Stereotypes of Madurese" in Kees van Dijk, Huub De Jonge, and Elly Touwen-Bouwsma, *Across Madura Strait* (Leiden: KITLV Press, 1995).

<sup>6</sup> Muthmainnah, *Jembatan Suramadu, Respon Ulama terhadap Industrialisasi* (Yogyakarta: LKPSM, 1998), xiv-xv.

<sup>7</sup> He is a prominent figure, politician, lecture and lawyer. He was the chief justice of the Constitutional Court of Indonesia, the Minister of Defense (2000) and the Minister of Justice and Human Rights (2001).

cognitive process. In this regard, stereotypes could be perceived as categories of a social group. They work automatically and cognitively. “Stereotypes—like social categories more generally—are not individual attitudinal predilections, but deeply embedded, shared mental representations of the social object.”<sup>8</sup> However, it is essential to explain that there is an in-depth relationship between individual and social concerning how to produce and operate stereotyped patterns of a social object.

Aronson and McGlone place stereotypes as social identity threat which may create a disruptive effect and impairment of social intelligence. It may create *defensive adaptations* that can affect individuals to engage or disengage from social activities where stereotypes are relevant for decreasing intellectual improvement.<sup>9</sup> From this idea, it is plausible when some Madurese working and living in migrated-city prefer to hide their Madurese identity to evade stereotyping categorization and social identity threat from others.<sup>10</sup> Eriksen assumes that there may be a correlation between ethnicity and class: individuals belonging to specific ethnicity also belong to the particular category.<sup>11</sup> The violent conflict between Madurese migrant and local Dayaks in West Kalimantan in 1996 could be portrayed as a glaring example of how ethnicity and social class were misused for having communal violence. In this conflict, both Dayaks and Madurese had been playing ethnic boundaries to stimulate racial awareness among people. The ethnic strife strengthens the sensibility of people to persist ethnic identity marker during their interaction with outsiders. Here, ethnic identity, according to Klinken, grows through competition, not through isolation.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Roger Brubaker, *Ethnicity Without Groups* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 2004), 72.

<sup>9</sup> Joshua Aronson and Matthew S. McGlone, “Stereotypes and Social Identity Threat” in Nelson, Todd D, *Handbook of Prejudice, Stereotypes, and Discrimination* (New York: Psychology Press, 2009), 154.

<sup>10</sup> Isnani, “Kehidupan Orang-Orang Madura di Kota-kota Perantauan,” *Lokakarya Laporan Penelitian Sementara*, 4-6 Juli, published in proceeding book, *Madura II*, published by Department of Education and Culture, Republic of Indonesia, (1978), 154-176.

<sup>11</sup> Thomas Hylland Eriksen, *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Anthropological Perspectives* (New York: Pluto Press, 2010), 11.

<sup>12</sup> Gerry van Klinken, *Communal Violence and Democratization in Indonesia: Small Town Wars* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 65.

As a mirror, social categories sometimes appear in an individual character which is varied from one individual to another. Some people tend to identify individual from stereotypes entrenched within his fictitious social style. Such identification often happens when people guess individual as Madurese only from its physical appearances, such as black-hard body and loud voice.<sup>13</sup> The phenomenon reminds us to reflect on “imagined” and “experienced” Madurese identity carefully. Holy and Stuchlik describe that one of the goals of anthropological research is to untangle discrepancies between notions and actions, between people perception and their experience.<sup>14</sup> Eko, for instance, a Javanese person living in Madura more than 30 years, insisted that the real life of the Madurese society could be different from whatever non-Madurese has perceived it.<sup>15</sup> Here, lived experiences and encounters are needed. In line with Pak Eko, Hermawan, a Moluccan living in Madura for more than ten years, stated that stereotypes attached to Madurese do not utterly exist in their daily life. In fact, he found some fine social characteristics among Madurese which reasonably must be culturally enclosed as “stereotypes” of Madurese, such as loyalty and honesty.<sup>16</sup> Huub de Jonge wrote that in the first step he planned to go to Madura his colleagues gave him an early warning and advice to be careful with Madurese people.<sup>17</sup>

According to Eriksen stereotypes may help the individual to divide the multifaceted social world into kinds of people and provide simple criteria.<sup>18</sup> The *kinds* and *criteria* will give personal impression whereby he or she can understand society. In this regard, it is also important to note that people commonly (and stereotypically) recognized all Madurese as Muslims: to be a Madurese is to be a Muslim. Many individuals perceive Madura as *Serambi Madinah* (the veranda of Medina) linked with Aceh Darussalam as *Serambi Mekah* (the veranda of Mecca). This social

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<sup>13</sup> This is compared with Javanese or Sundanese people who are stereotyped as relatively white, calm and quiet.

<sup>14</sup> Read Ladislav Holy and Milan Stuchlik, *Actions, Norms and Representations: Foundation of Anthropological Inquiry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

<sup>15</sup> Interview with Eko (4/11/2017).

<sup>16</sup> Interview with Hermawan (4/12/2017).

<sup>17</sup> Huub de Jonge, *Madura dalam Empat Zaman: Pedagang, Perkembangan Ekonomi dan Islam* (Jakarta: Gramedia, 1989).

<sup>18</sup> Eriksen, Thomas Hylland. *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Anthropological Perspectives* (New York: Pluto Press, 2010), 30.

embodiment sustained during vividly cultural changes occurred within Madurese society. The statistical report affirms that non-Muslim citizen in Madura represented less than one percent of the Madurese population in Madura.<sup>19</sup> However, it does not mean to exclude non-Muslim existence from Madurese society. In fact, the non-Muslim population in Madura played their roles in coloring and elevating Madurese culture.

Perceiving Madurese people as Muslim society is an aptly religious category that coincides with the social fact of historical Madura. By scrutinizing history of Madura, we will find a peak-point of social classes where Islam has been put as an ethnic and identity marker of the Madurese. Even though the history of Madura does not begin with Islamic narratives, it is easy to link Madurese knowledge and believe with Islam and Islamic outgrowth.

### **Madurese Ethnicity and Inter-Ethnic Relation**

Craig Prentiss assumes that religion has a subtle but significant role in making and preserving the social construction of race and ethnicity. In the fundamental argument, he insists that race and ethnicity are the product of human imagination: they did not exist from the beginning of time, but a result of complex interplay of human construction. Within this connection, religion originates from playing its role.<sup>20</sup> This idea follows what Berger elucidates in his *Social Construction of Reality* that reality was socially constructed through the sociological transformation of human life.<sup>21</sup>

Madurese mythology of Raden Segoro is meaningful to excavate sociological knowledge of Madurese ethnicity. In spite of questioning whether the story of Raden Segoro is myth or historical fact, it is principal to see that this story influenced culturally-constructed memory of Madurese knowledge concerning to their ancestry and ethnicity. Various versions emerge relating to the mythology of naming. Some assume that Madura is an abbreviation of *madu e ra ara* (honey in the land), referring to the story of honey and bee-nests found by the Princess

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<sup>19</sup> Read annual report of Statistics in *Bangkalan dalam Angka*, *Sampang dalam Angka*, *Pamekasan dalam Angka*, and *Sumenep dalam Angka*, 2016, from Central Bureau of Statistic (BPS).

<sup>20</sup> Craig R Prentiss, *Religion and the Creation of Race and Ethnicity* (New York: New York University Press, 2003), 1-4.

<sup>21</sup> Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckman, *The Social Construction of Reality* (New York: Penguin Book, 1991).

Tunjungsekar in the island, some suppose that it refers to *maddhuna dara* (honey blood), and others believe that it was originated in the term of *paddhu ara* (corner pot).<sup>22</sup> Otherwise, Rifa'i wrote that it might be adopted from the city in eastern India called Madura, that is, surrounded by arid and waterless lands.

Madurese mythology does not give a definitive explanation on how Madurese ethnicity was constructed and how religion (especially Islam) influenced that construction. If we approve Brubaker's idea that ethnicity is a social consensus constructed by unity of blood while the solidarity of citizenship constructs nationalism, we might assume that ethnicity of the Madurese was inherited within the story of Raden Segoro as "the founder" of the island. Zawawi Imron, a well-known Madurese poet, outlines Madurese identity through a Madurese maxim, *lahir e madbureh, nginum aeng madbureh, tetep oreng madbureh* (someone who was born in Madura and drinks its water is a Madurese).<sup>23</sup>

However, Madurese ethnicity also belongs to inter-ethnic relation. Ethnicity, according to Eriksen, refers to "aspects of relationships between groups which consider themselves, and are regarded by others, as being culturally distinctive."<sup>24</sup> The discourse of ethnicity involves majority and minority, dominating and discriminated group, in-group and out-group, and another subtheme of intergroup relation issues. Intergroup relation may conserve and influence the internal-external identification process within social actors, through categorical ethnic exclusion or inclusion. In this context, boundaries are culturally imagined to construct in-group and out-group perspective by the actors on seeing themselves and others. Barth presumes that ethnic group stem from biologically self-perpetuating, fundamental cultural values, the field of communication and interaction, and a membership which identifies itself and is identified by others.<sup>25</sup> In what follows, these defining elements of an ethnic group will be explored.

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<sup>22</sup> Mien A Rifa'i, *Manusia Madura*, (Yogyakarta: Pilar Media. 2007), 30.

<sup>23</sup> Interview with D. Zawawi Imron, 26/10/2017.

<sup>24</sup> Thomas Hylland Eriksen, *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Anthropological Perspectives* (New York: Pluto Press, 2010), 4-5.

<sup>25</sup> Fredrick Barth, *Ethnic Group and Boundaries* (Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1969), 10-11.

## Self-Perpetuating

In his book, *Manusia Madura*, Rifa'i described some cultural aspects that perpetuate Madurese identities, such as religion, language, art, and the system of knowledge.<sup>26</sup> He wrote that the ancestor of Madurese people believed in animism, that is, approved by the relic of *Bato Kennong* or *Bato Egghung* (sacred stone) which could be found in many places in Madura. Hindu and Buddhism have also colored the past of Madurese religiosity and inherited several names in social-anthropology of Madura, such as *Candi* (holy place) and *Mandala* (ascetic legacy). Hindus and Buddhist traces have also ingrained within Madurese tradition such as *rokat tase'* (religious ritual of the sea), and *nyalase* (flowering the grave).

In the 15<sup>th</sup> century, Madurese people acknowledged Islam, and it quickly increased and nurtured as a religion of the majority that inspired everyday life and culture. Islam did not only encourage Madurese in the way of being Muslim, but also in the way of being Madurese: many Arabic words influenced their language, Arabic names inspired their naming, Arabic clothing motivated their clothing, and Arabic religiosity revived their religious vision. Islamic perpetuation within Madurese tradition has retained in any aspect of people life, including language and literacy. Some Arabic-absorptive words that could be found in the Madurese language are *aseyam* (fasting, from Arabic *al-ṣiyām*), *mosakkeat* (difficult, from Arabic *al-mashaqqab*), and *mosiba* (disaster, from Arabic *al-muṣībah*). Living in the *santri* culture,<sup>27</sup> Madurese people have been familiar with Arabic-Islamic expressions, both in formal and informal manners.

The art performance of *Saman* signifies cultural expression of the Madurese rooted in Islamic-Arabic tradition. In *Saman*, Muslim performers chanted beautiful songs and praises in the Madurese language for the Prophet Muhammad, through mixed-elements of traditional Madurese art and Islamic commendations to the Prophet and God.<sup>28</sup> Madurese also introduced what they called *mamaca* (the art of chanting

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<sup>26</sup> Mien A Rifa'i, *Manusia Madura*, (Yogyakarta: Pilar Media. 2007), 42-78.

<sup>27</sup> Yanwar Pribadi persists that Madurese constructed their *santri* culture from three elements: the *pesantren* (Islamic traditional education system), the Nahdlatul Ulama (Muslim organization), and the *kiai* (traditional Islamic authority. Read Yanwar Pribadi, "Religious Networks in Madura: *Pesantren*, Nahdlatul Ulama and *Kiai* as the Core of Santri Culture", *Al-Jami'ab*, Vol. 51, No. 1, (2013 M/1434 H), 1-31.

<sup>28</sup> Helena Bouvier, *Lebur: Semi Musik dan Pertunjukan dalam Masyarakat Madura* (Jakarta: Yayasan Obor Indonesia, 2002), 218-220.

recited Madurese poetry concerning with history of the Prophet). However, Bouvier asserted that element of pre-Hinduism and pre-Islam had been deeply embedded in the theatrical art of *mamacan*.<sup>29</sup>

In addition, Madurese people have good knowledge on how to interact with the nature and environment around them. For a long time, Madurese are renowned as a seafarer and fisherman who perceive the ocean as their “world.” The Madurese mastered sailing and fishing in the sea. In one of the famous traditional songs, Madurese people symbolize their life as *abental ombe’ asapo’ angin salanjengab* (always pillowed by the wave and covered by the wind). Kurt Stenross describes that the Madurese are among the great maritime and trading people of the Indonesian archipelago. He argues that the ecology and demography of Madura contributed to the success of the Madurese as maritime entrepreneurs.<sup>30</sup>

Human-nature interaction of the Madurese could also be revealed within Madurese aphorism. To mention a few of them: *balibis abali ka rabbana* (like a grouse coming back to its nest), *malekko’ mara tangghiling* (coiled like an ant-bear), and *pegba’ juko’na jbe’ palekko aenggoba* (catch the fish, do not mess the water). These aphorisms exemplified that Madurese people have construed their social knowledge based on their interaction with nature. In naming natural phenomenon, for instance, the Madurese expressed their close understanding of nature, such as calling rainy season as *nembhara* (because of the wind of the west [*bhara*]) and dry season as *nemor* (because of the wind of the east [*temor*]). The direction was an important aspect of Madurese ecology: they have regarded and upheld Madurese local wisdom on making a path in building houses. Traditionally, the Madurese will always build their home facing to the south<sup>31</sup>, with the *langgar* built in the western part of the yard, while the kitchen has its position in the southern part of the yard. This traditional and cultural architecture was called *taneyan lanjeng*.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 158-160.

<sup>30</sup> Kurt Stenross, *Madurese Seafarers: Prabus, Timber and Illegality on the Margins of the Indonesian State* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2011).

<sup>31</sup> Based on Madurese mythology, traditional Madurese perceived the north as a threat of the past from which their ascendant came and avoided to remember that memory.

<sup>32</sup> Pudji Pratitis Wismantara, “Struktur Pemukiman Taneyan Lanjheng Berbasis Budaya Santri dan Non-Santri di Madura” in Argo Twikromo et.al, *Pencitraan Adat Menyikapi Globalisasi* (Yogyakarta: PSAP UGM, 2010), 174-211.

## Fundamental Cultural Values

Mieder asserts that proverb fulfills people need to summarize their experiences into pieces of wisdom or poetical words that inherit cultural—individually or socially—affairs.<sup>33</sup> It signifies the contextual condition of the people and involves imagined situation of them. In some cases, it becomes practical and strategic communication that might describe and influence the social identity of the particular community. There are types of the proverb, and the Madurese have at least three kinds. The first is called *parebbasan*, analogical term to express specific condition of individual or community in animal/nature/object illustration. For instance, to convey that there is always an exceptional person in a family, Madurese proverb says *tellor sa patarangan ta' kerah becce' kabbbi* (there is always a rotten egg among eggs). The second is *paparegan* which can be identified as a simple poem such as *tamba jato tamba kelang; tamba lako tamba pakan* (additional job requires other wage). The third is called *saloka* that contains wisdom and beautiful words, e.g., *pa'e' jbe' dulih palowa, manis jbe' dulih kalodbu'* (do not directly vomit the bitter thing, do not immediately swallow the sweet one).<sup>34</sup>

Besides attempts to describe Madurese identity through proverbs, Iqbal Nurul Azhar tried to elucidate Madurese characters through Madurese songs and lyrics. In his article “*Karakter Masyarakat Madura dalam Syair-syair lagu Daerah Madura*” (Characters of Madurese Society within the Local Songs of Madura), Azhar stated that several characters of the Madurese could be discovered within lyrics of the Madurese local songs, such as being patriotic, religious, hard worker, responsible, polite, and faithful to the family.<sup>35</sup> He refined these characters from selected songs written by Madurese artists and musicians. The songs were compiled in the book of *Kumpulan Lagu Daerah Madura* (The Compilation of Madurese Songs).

Madurese proverbs and songs had, in fact, influenced the life of Madurese society. Benjamin Lee Whorf assumes that speakers of different kinds of language were cognitively different from one another,

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<sup>33</sup> Wolfgang Mieder, *Proverbs: A Handbook* (London: Greenwood Press, 2004), 1.

<sup>34</sup> Misnadin, “Nilai-nilai Luhur Budaya dalam Pepatah-pepatah Madura (Positive Cultural Values of Madurese Proverbs)” *Atavisme Jurnal Ilmiah Kajian Sastra*, Vol. 15, No. 1. (2012), pp. 75-84.

<sup>35</sup> Iqbal Nurul Azhar, “Karakter Masyarakat Madura dalam Syair-syair Lagu Daerah Madura” *Jurnal Atavisme*, Vol 12, No 2, Desember (2009): 217-227.

because of those language differences. Language, in some degrees, influences people thought and mind.<sup>36</sup> In this regard, proverb and song produced and reproduced based on lived experiences of specific society might construct different perspective among different people.

Within these characters, Madurese identity as religious people becomes convincingly confirmed. They represented themselves as Muslim who believe in and practice Islam as the way of life. Adapted from nuggets of the famous song of *Tanduk Majbang*, Madurese recognized themselves as *abbental syahadat, asapo' iman, apajbung Allah, asandhing Nabi* (pillowed by confession, covered by faith, pawned by God, and accompanied by the Prophet). The Islamic representation within the local culture could also be identified in Minangkabau people who acknowledge Islam as their basic principle on building culture: *adat basandi syara', syara' basandi kitabuloh* (tradition is based on Islamic law, Islamic law is based on the holy book [the Qur'an]). Islam and Madurese tradition have culturally intertwined and entangled each other. Strengthening this reality, Rifa'i wrote, "...if there was a Madurese believed in Catholicism or Christianity, that was a very extraordinary exceptional."<sup>37</sup> However, it is worth noting that few of Madurese living in Madura Island converted to Christianity and Catholicism.<sup>38</sup> Also, there is Madurese community in Sumberpakem Jember who believed and practiced Christianity for centuries.<sup>39</sup>

Islamic values infiltrated within the cultural activities of the Madurese and staged as an ethnic identity marker.<sup>40</sup> Islamic rituals and festivals have inherently become social fiestas, such as *tellasan* (the holy day of Ied), *molod* (the birth day of the Prophet), *tajhin sorah* (the celebration of Islamic new year), and *tajhin sappar* (another food

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<sup>36</sup> Read Benjamin Lee Whorf, *Language, Thought and Reality: Selected Writings of Benjamin Lee Whorf* (Massachusetts: The MIT press, 1962), 207-219; Julia M Penn, *Linguistic Relativity versus Innate Ideas* (Paris, Mouton, 1972), 53-56.

<sup>37</sup> Mien A Rifa'i, *Lintasan Sejarah Madura*. (Surabaya: Yayasan Lebbar Legga, 1993), 49.

<sup>38</sup> Based on my interview with several priests in four municipalities (Bangkalan, Sampang, Pamekasan, and Sumenep) in Madura, it is proven that more than 30 Madurese individuals embraced Christianity and Catholicism in our times.

<sup>39</sup> Read Asy'ari, *Melintasi Batas-Batas Beragama: Studi Atas Konstruksi Sosial Keagamaan dalam Membangun Kerukunan Antar Umat Islam dan Kristen di Desa Sumberpakem Kecamatan Sumberjambe Kabupaten Jember Jawa Timur* (Thesis--State Islamic University of Sunan Kalijaga, Yogyakarta, 2016); Edy Sumartono, *Kidung di Kaki Gunung Raung* (Bandung: Bina Media Informasi, 2009).

<sup>40</sup> Interview with Latief Wiyata, 17/11/2017.

celebration in Safar). Madurese people are highly obsessed to implement Islamic order, including to visit Mecca and Medina for performing *ḥājj* (pilgrimage). For Madurese, Islam does create not only religious activism but also shape social and ethnic prestige. Mansurnoor emphasizes that ulama (Islamic leader) in Madura are an inseparable part of the local social structure. They have a strategic position that allows exercising a leadership role in the local context. The social leadership of Madurese people to some extents depends on religious leadership. He acknowledges Madurese recognition to the ulama through Madurese term of *Keyaeb* (the ulama of pesantren who has extensive relation with broader society) and *Mak Kaeb* (the ulama with close connection). In his term, he called the second as *local kyai* and the first as *supra-local kyai*.<sup>41</sup>

Besides the authority of the ulama as Muslim leader among Madurese people, other social bodies influence cultural entities in Madura. In his thesis, *Islam and Politics in Madura*, Yanwar Pribadi mentioned other social authorities outside the ulama in Madura, namely *blater*<sup>42</sup> (local strongmen) and *kelebum*<sup>43</sup> (village heads). Pribadi argues that these authorities (*kiai*, *blater*, and *kelebum*) have overriding access to use religious power, physical force, and formal leadership within their controlled territory.<sup>44</sup> The boundaries of power-relation between these authorities somehow melted in distorted arena and territories. *Kiai* as religious leader currently tends to plunge into practical politics that has ethically been avoided in the past by *kiai* within *pesantren* tradition. However, this phenomenon shows that religious or Islamic traces are strongly attached within Madurese activities, including practical politics. Madurese interpretation of Islamic values into proverb could be identified in *bango' jhubba'a e ada' etembang jhubba' e budih* (motivating people to have good ending [*ḥusn al-khātimah*] in their life), *lakonah lakonih*, *kennengngah kennengngih* (ordering people to do the right job related to their

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<sup>41</sup> Iik Arifin Mansurnoor, *Islam in an Indonesian World: Ulama of Madura* (Yogyakarta: Gadjah Mada University, 1990), 335.

<sup>42</sup> To understand the relationship between *kiai* and *blater* on competing social power in Madura, read Abdul Rozaki, *Menabur Kharisma Menuai Kuasa: Kiprah Kiai dan Blater Sebagai Rezim Kembar di Madura* (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Marwa, 2004).

<sup>43</sup> For further reading of *kelebum* and its relation with the *kiai*, read Endy Saputra, *Kiai Langgar and Kalebum: A Contestation between Cultural Broker in a Non-Pesantren Village in Madura, Indonesia* (Yogyakarta: Gadjah Mada University Press, 2009).

<sup>44</sup> Yanwar Pribadi, *Islam and Politics in Madura: Ulama and Other Local Leaders in Search of Influence (1990-2010)* (Doctoral thesis--Leiden University, Leiden, 2013), 9.

capacity and capability), *manossa coma dbarmah* (reminding people that human duty is only to serve), and *kembhang malate kembhang bhabur, mandhar bhadha'a paste, terro daddhia haji mabrur* (hoping to make a pilgrimage and have a blessed journey).

Another proverb that signifies an innate character of the Madurese is *etembhang pote mata, bhango' pote tolang* (it is better to die than to get shy). This proverb is commonly understood as the instinctive desire of the Madurese to fight and make violence. *Carok*, as an art of traditional martial fight between two (or more) individuals involved in a conflict, was generally labeled to Madurese people as a peaceful way to solve a conflict. In some cases, when Madurese person decided to do *carok*, he will come to *kiai* for asking a blessed permit and amulet. Madurese people said, *mon kerras pa'akerres* (if you want to become a strongman you must have a power). They tend to keep silent on responding or resolving their problem, including to fight or attack their opponent. They said, *mon raja ghaludbugga ta' kera raja ojhenna* (the louder you speak, the weaker you are). Latief Wiyata explored some reasons that encourage Madurese to conduct *carok* which might be simply classified into (1) family problem and (2) social prestige.<sup>45</sup>

For the Madurese, family and kinship are principal elements to build society. When ethnicity was identified as solidarity based on united blood, a kinship, Madurese people traditionally attempted to keep their kinship through the marital approach and devoted friendship. They preserve the term of *settong dhere* (one blood) and *taretan dhibbi'* (our family) to express their ancestral network with other. On the one hand, this principle creates a strong attachment from in-group people, on the other hand, it produces imaginable detachment of out-group people. However, Madurese people have also acknowledged as individualistic: *ngala' karebbha dhibbi'* (individualistic). Many of them ignored the kinship and family network, and prefer to separate themselves from family ties. In this context, there is a Madurese proverb said *oreng deddih taretan, taretan deddih oreng* (other becomes family, the family becomes other).

### **Field of Communication and Interaction**

Cultural differences mark ethnic groups and measure social identity by a manner of *in* and *out* of groupness. Communication and social

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<sup>45</sup> Latief Wiyata, *Carok Konflik Kekerasan dan Harga Diri Orang Madura* (Yogyakarta: LKiS, 2002).

interaction between two or more collective parties become one of the crucial keywords within cultural studies of social identity and ethnicity. It is plausible to say that ethnic groups are what people believe or imagine to be, where the process of identification arises out of and within interactions. Referring to Barth, ethnicity focuses more on relationships of cultural differentiation, and specifically upon contact between collectivities, between *them and us*.<sup>46</sup>

Madurese people identified cultural and ethnic groupness by using the term of *taretan dibhi'* (our family) and *settong dere* (one blood) to include Madurese people into *in-group* and others into *out-group* classification. The sense of ethnic partiality of the Madurese could be noticed when they meet each other, especially wherever outside the mainland of Madura. Ethno-social conflict in Kalimantan between Madurese and Dayak in 1996s, for instance, was exploded because of ethnic preference of the Madurese and the Dayaks.<sup>47</sup> On doing racial classification, Madurese people to some extent use the word *oreng laen* (another person) or *oreng jauh* (people far away) to call individuals or groups detached from their community. Such identification eventually creates a different approach to inter-ethnic communication and interaction.

As a neighboring ethnic group of the Madurese, Javanese people was somewhat represented as a mirror and an ideal for the Madurese as well as a threat. In anthropological studies, Madura has remained ignorant of being research concern: seemingly before 1977, Madura had no proper geographical and cultural identity for most authors.<sup>48</sup> In the past, traditional Madurese acknowledged only two worlds: *Jabah* (Java) and *Madureh* (Madura). Many people in Madura perceived Kalimantan—as another destination island for working—as *Jabah Dajah* (the Northern Java) rather than Borneo or Kalimantan. Madurese people regarded Java and Javanese culture as culturally “superior” and call Madurese migration

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<sup>46</sup> Richard Jenkins, *Rethinking Ethnicity: Arguments and Explorations* (Los Angeles: Sage Publication, 2008), 11-12.

<sup>47</sup> Read Huub de Jonge, “Why the Madurese? Ethnic Conflicts in West and East Kalimantan Compared,” *Asian Journal of Social Science*, Volume 34, Issue 3, (2006), 456 – 474.

<sup>48</sup> Lawrence Husson, “Eight Centuries of Madurese Migration to East Java,” *Asian and Pacific Migration Journal*, Vol 6, No 1, (1997), 77-102.

to Java as *onggba* (going up) and return to Madura as *toron* (going down).<sup>49</sup> Madurese people also utilized this kind of communicative approach in interaction with other different ethnic groups and highlighted Madurese saying *kor jhe' la nyala* (as long as they do not make problems) as a basis. Madurese people, in fact, lived in close interaction with other groups. They had no exclusive livelihood, although in some degree they seem to be self-protective of their identity and ethnicity.<sup>50</sup>

Some of the non-Madurese individuals are afraid to start communication with Madurese persons because of stereotypes marked to them as unpredictable and temperamental. “It is not true that Madurese people are temperamental and rude. I have been here in Madura for more than ten years, and I have known that they are respectable and loyal people. What I like from Madurese is that they are very frankly. They say what they want and what they do not, without keeping any feelings,” said Hermawan.<sup>51</sup> The same impression was expressed by other non-Madurese persons who lived in Madura for a long time. Madurese people build inter-ethnic and social communication based on mutual respect.<sup>52</sup> Social tensions that sometimes appear, according to them, are political-based problems triggered through religious and ethnic identity issues.

### **Ethnic Group Membership**

In his paper “*Kehidupan Orang-orang Madura di Kota-Kota Perantauan*” Isnani persisted that some of the Madurese migrants living in the big city felt ashamed to declare their ethnic identity of being Madurese.<sup>53</sup> Being identified as a member of specific ethnic groups somewhat sharpen a cultural barrier or boundary to another ethnic group which may influence how people interact with each other. To obscure such cultural

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<sup>49</sup> Muhammad Djakfar, “Tradisi Toron Etnis Madura: Memahami Pertautan Agama, Budaya, dan Etos Bisnis,” *Jurnal el Harakah*, Vol 14, No 1, (2012), 34-50.

<sup>50</sup> Take an example of the case of Suramadu Bridge plan where Madurese ulama—representing Madurese society—rejected the plan in the name of religious idealism, cultural values of the Madurese, and social sustainability. The resistance brings the issue of out-group expansion into Madura as a threat toward in-group existence of the Madurese. Read Yanwar Pribadi, “The Suramadu Bridge Affairs: Un-Bridging the State and the Kyai in New Order Madura,” *Studia Islamika*, Vol 22, No 2, (2015), 233-268.

<sup>51</sup> Interview with Hermawan (4/12/2017).

<sup>52</sup> Interview with Bing, Eko, Erni, Frans, Ana, and Sumardi.

<sup>53</sup> Isnani, “*Kehidupan Orang-orang Madura di Kota-Kota Perantauan*,” Research paper presented in in Lokakarya, Batu, 4-6 July, (1978).

limit, many Madurese avoid to uncover their ethnic identity publicly. In this regard, they recognize to politically and sociologically govern ethnic-group membership.

In Madura, ethnic membership is ascribed by patrilineal descent: the father's position has significant influence to determine social association within the ethnic group of the Madurese. However, ethnic group membership of the Madurese is fluid that to some extent creates indefinite identification. Ethnic group membership attachment or detachment depends on many aspects, including political and economic interest. Jenkins supposes that collective interest does not reflect perceived similarities and differences between ethnic groups, but it does encourage ethnic identification.<sup>54</sup> In his writing, Weber wrote that "ethnic membership does not constitute a group; it only facilitates group formation of any kind, particularly in the political sphere."<sup>55</sup> To explore ethnic-group membership we may examine through "cultural stuff," that is, experienced within ethnic and inter-ethnic relations such as the way people perceive their group, the prominent characteristics of them and other groups, and particular worldviews maintained, contested and transformed among them. Referring to Weber's theory of "ethnic community action," Eriksen emphasizes that ethnic differences have become so visible in many societies that it has become impossible to ignore them.<sup>56</sup> Mead affirms that group membership is a symbolic, not a physical matter.<sup>57</sup> The members internalize symbols of group membership and affect their acts. If we cite Randall Collins' idea, we may say that particular acts are always micro, but the structure (group membership) that generates it into a macro.<sup>58</sup>

### ***Pendalungan: A Cultural Encounter***

*Pendalungan* could be identified as *periuk besar* (great melting pot) where various traditions meet, integrate, and decisively produce a new

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<sup>54</sup> Richard Jenkins, *Rethinking Ethnicity: Arguments and Explorations* (Los Angeles: Sage Publication, 2008), 10.

<sup>55</sup> Max Weber, *Economy and Society* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 389.

<sup>56</sup> Eriksen, Thomas Hylland. *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Anthropological Perspectives* (New York: Pluto Press. 2010), 2.

<sup>57</sup> Anselm Strauss, *The Social Psychology of George Herbert Mead* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1956), xiii.

<sup>58</sup> Randal Collins, *Interaction Ritual Chains* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 5-6.

alteration of culture. It may also be defined as the descendant of inter-ethnic marriage between Madurese and Javanese people or cultural encounter between Javanese and Madurese tradition.<sup>59</sup> Konstantinos Retsikas elucidates that *pendalungan* stem from Javanese words, *medal*, and *lunga*, which mean “going out to stay in a certain place.”<sup>60</sup> The word *pendalungan* to some extent means speaking or talking by using vague and discourteous language,<sup>61</sup> because every migrant community reserves their language on the one hand and recognize another language on the other.

As a multicultural society, Madurese *pendalungan* tend to be inclusive. Sutarto classified seven characters of *pendalungan* culture: (1) they are *in-between* society living in transition between traditional and industrial era; (2) the majority are *primary-orality* people who prefer to talk and chat, not to think out of the box; (3) adaptive and open to social change; (4) expressive and transparent; (5) paternalistic; (6) regarding kinship relation; and (7) somehow temperamental and unpredictable.<sup>62</sup> These characters stem from inter-cultural interaction and inter-ethnic communication.

Term of *Pendalungan* covers certain culture assimilated with another culture, such as *Chinese Pendalungan* or *Arab Pendalungan*. Indeed, it could be classified as an independent assimilation-based culture<sup>63</sup> as well as becomes a distinctive cultural identity stemmed from inter-ethnic acculturation. It is supposed that more than two times of Madurese people live within *pendalungan* culture and experience Madurese tradition outside Madura because of migration.<sup>64</sup> From this reality, anecdotal classification of *Madura Swasta* (unofficial Madurese) and *Madura Negeri* (official Madurese) emerges. The first is to identify Madurese people who were born in the area of *Tapal Kuda* in East Java and wherever outside

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<sup>59</sup> Ikwan Setiawan, “Mengapa (Harus) Pendalungan? Konstruksi dan Kepentingan dalam Penetapan Identitas Jember,” conference paper presented in *Seminar Budaya Membincang Kembali Terminologi Pendalungan*, Jember: 10 December, (2016).

<sup>60</sup> Yongky Gijih Prasisko, *Blandongan: Perebutan Kuasa Budaya Masyarakat Jawa dan Madura* (Yogyakarta: LPRIS, 2015), 42.

<sup>61</sup> Prawiroatmodjo, *Bausastra Jawa-Indonesia II* (Jakarta: Gunung Agung, 1981), 53-81.

<sup>62</sup> Ayu Sutarto, “Sekilas tentang Masyarakat Pendalungan,” Conference paper presented in seminar *Jelajah Budaya*, 7-10 August, (2006).

<sup>63</sup> Christanto P Raharjo, “Pendhalungan: Sebuah Periuk Besar Masyarakat Multikultural,” paper presented in the conference of *Jelajah Budaya*, 13 August, (2006).

<sup>64</sup> Read Lawrence Husson, “Eighth Centuries of Madurese Migration to East Java,” *Asian and Pacific Migration Journal*, Vol 6, No 1, (1997), 77-102.

Madura, while the second implies all Madurese born and live in the mainland and its surroundings. That sketchy classification remains historical experiences of inter-ethnic relation among the Madurese which constructed “cultural borders” not only between them and another ethnic group but also among the Madurese themselves.

Having that that the human world may be constructed in three different layers of order: individual order, interaction order, and institutional order,<sup>65</sup> it is worth noting that internal-external identification represents a keyword to look at selfhood as an embodied individual. Interaction order, furthermore, enrich what Erving Goffman calls as “the art of impression management”: orchestrating a cultural spot where self-image and public-image encounter. Here, in some respects, Goffman asserts that identification is a part of daily human activities.<sup>66</sup> In line with this, Randall Collins persists that individual is not only a body: it represents dynamics of situations. He argues that individual is “moving precipitate across situations.”<sup>67</sup> Individuals are interactional. They need social space to express their ideas and practices.

*Pendalungan* culture represents inclusiveness and multicultural mind of the Madurese on building and keeping their social identity. In the Madurese Christian community in Sumberpakem, for instance, there are many couples born and lived within the *pendalungan* tradition in term of ethnicity (Madurese and Javanese) or religion (Islam and Christianity). Madurese Christian in the district could interact with Muslim neighbor through shared cultural activities in everyday life. They do not need to cover their identity as Christians to get recognition as a part of Madurese society. It happens because of historical time that gradually eliminates cultural detachment between Christianity and Madurese identity. This phenomenon differs from the experience of some Madurese Christians living in the mainland who prefer to obscure their Christianity unless to whom they are familiar with. Emma, a Madurese woman, born in the Muslim family, told that her story of being Christian was a story of rejection and resistance. Her family and neighbor refused her to live in the district and forced her to leave. Her family and neighbor exclude her

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<sup>65</sup> Richard Jenkins, *Social Identity* (London: Routledge, 2004), 5.

<sup>66</sup> Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh, 1956), 132-151.

<sup>67</sup> Randal Collins, *Interaction Ritual Chains* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 4.

from a Madurese group-ness because of her conversion to Christianity.<sup>68</sup> Guttman assumes that partition and cultural-border making which is more stable is structured in the mind of people.<sup>69</sup> Perspective about the other strongly influences the way someone constructs inter-subjective and inter-ethnic group relation. In line with this, Apostolov suggests considering the civilizational frontier as a zone of contact, in which the alternative between accommodation and confrontation is open, rather than a fault-line of encounter.<sup>70</sup>

## Conclusion

For the Madurese, Islam remains meaningful to deal with ethnic identification. Madurese person who believes and practices Christianity will be perceived as less Madurese and recognized out of ethnic-groupness. Some of Madurese Christian tend to live outside Madura (and Madurese society) to experience contented public space of Christianity.<sup>71</sup> Islam has become part of ethnic markers that finds its justification through cultural assimilation with the local tradition. Madurese proverb *abbental syahadat, asapo' iman, apajbung Allah, asandhing Nabi* describes the culturally rooted connection between Islam and Madurese ethnicity, that is, practiced by the people.

Islamic values have for centuries influenced everyday life of the Madurese not only in term of constructing internal identification of Muslim community but also of creating external categorization of others, including Madurese Christian. To some degree, Madurese people tend to restrain ethnic traces just for specific religious values (Islam) although there has been Madurese community existing and practicing Christianity outside the mainland. In many cases of Madurese Muslim conversion, the Madurese maxim *oreng deddih taretan, taretan deddih oreng* (other becomes family, the family becomes other) preserves to create a cultural and ethnic partition. The domain of religious differentiation raises more strongly than the spirit of racial resemblance. Jenkins asserts that ethnicity is centrally a matter of shared meaning.<sup>72</sup> Similarly, Islam—as an

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<sup>68</sup> Interview with Emma, 9/11/2017.

<sup>69</sup> Mario Apostolov, *The Christian–Muslim Frontier: A Zone of Contact, Conflict or Cooperation* (London: Routledge-Curzon, 2004), 105.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>71</sup> Interview with Sumardi, 25/1/2017.

<sup>72</sup> Richard Jenkins, *Rethinking Ethnicity: Arguments and Explorations* (Los Angeles: Sage Publication, 2008), 14.

important factor within Madurese tradition—becomes a social necessity to construe ethnicity and Madurese locality.

However, Madurese ethnicity could be socially intertwined with Christianity, that is, witnessed within Madurese Christian life in Sumberpakem, Jember. Compared with the homogenous condition in the mainland that separate Christianity from cultural ingredients of Madurese ethnicity, Madurese Christians in the district uphold Christianity as a religion on the one hand and preserve Madura as an ethnic identity on the other. One of the reasons is that the Madurese community in Sumberpakem had been living near to *pendalungan* culture which improves inclusive and multicultural society. Cultural and inter-ethnic encounters may construe different ways of perceiving the (religious or ethnic) others.

Ethnicity is a way of perceiving, interpreting, and representing the social world. It is not a thing *in* the world, but perspectives *on* the world.<sup>73</sup> In line with this, Madurese ethnicity is a matter of produced and reproduced meaning based on social interaction and categorization of others, which is different (and always changing) between one and another cultural situation and time. Budi, a Madurese Christian living in Bondowoso, East Java, expressed his past-Islamic experience of being Madurese descendant of inter-religious (Islam-Christianity) and inter-ethnic (Madurese-Chinese) marriage in Madura. There was no rejection from his family and neighbor at first time for that marriage, but eventually, his father preferred to live outside the Madura when the situation was changed.<sup>74</sup>

Madurese inclusiveness, religiously and culturally, creates social possibilities for assimilation and acculturation. It was witnessed by the presence of non-Madurese ethnics, e.g., Chinese, Arab, Javanese, Ambonese, and Moluccan in Madura or non-Islam religions such as Christianity and Buddhism. The thing that must be prevented as a treat for this pluralism and multiculturalism is a spirit of Islamism which has currently elevated in various religious movement. This kind of excessive religiosity drives to put several Muslim movements as “the main vehicle of religious and moral excellence within a generally wayward,

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<sup>73</sup> Roger Brubaker, *Ethnicity Without Groups* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 2004), 17.

<sup>74</sup> Interview with Budi, 13/8/2017.

unenlightened, or heedless community.”<sup>75</sup> It happens, for some reasons, because perceptions and understanding of Christianity vary among Muslim Madurese, that is, depending on background knowledge and institutionalized (Islamized or ethnicized) practice. Excessive religiosity and ethnicity tend to reduce Madura as an accessible public sphere for “Muslim” and “Madurese.” This perception aims to restrain geographical boundary with ideological or theological barriers. To exemplify fluidity of Madura and the Madurese identity, Zawawi Imron insists that “Madura is not only an island but ocean of knowledge.”

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<sup>75</sup> Clifford Geertz, *Peddlers ad Princes: Social Development and Economic Change in Two Indonesia Towns* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963), 150.

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