

## CULTURAL IDENTITY OF DIASPORIC JAVANESE MUSLIMS PONOROGO IN MALAYSIA: CONTINUITY AND CHANGE

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**Abstract:** *This research seeks to explain the cultural changes and identity in diasporic experience among Javanese Muslims of Ponorogo in Johor, Malaysia. Stuart Hall's perspective on cultural identity and diaspora stress that these are significant concerns for anyone struggling the identity. This paper also examines the notions of a homeland the Javanese Muslims of Ponorogo diaspora in Johor, Malaysia, has held over the past 110 years. What do these notions entail, which developments were essential to their continuity and change, and in what way are current notions of a homeland related to the present-day status and position of the Javanese Muslims of Ponorogo the local society? The cultural changes of the Ponorogo Muslims diaspora in Johor maintained their cultural identity and social harmony with the local society. This research aims to look further at the negotiation process of cultural identity among Ponorogo Muslims in their tradition. The tradition is a cultural dialectics of Javanese and Malay culture. Even these traditions are dynamically changing to be simplified, the essence of their cultural tradition is not affected. Internally, in Johor, sometimes there are other traditions, but they do not take their Javanese identity off.*

**Key Words :** *Identity, Tradition, Ponorogo Muslims.*

**Abstrak:** *Penelitian ini berusaha menjelaskan perubahan budaya dan identitas dalam pengalaman diaspora di kalangan Muslim Ponorogo di Johor, Malaysia. Dalam perspektif Stuart Hall tentang identitas budaya dan diaspora menekankan bahwa hal ini menjadi perhatian penting bagi siapa pun yang berupaya untuk mempertahankan identitas tersebut. Tulisan ini juga mengkaji konstruksi gagasan 'tanah air' bagi diaspora Muslim Ponorogo di Johor, Malaysia, selama 110 tahun terakhir. Apa yang terkandung dalam gagasan-gagasan tersebut dan bagaimana perkembangan bagi kesinambungan dan perubahannya, serta dengan cara apa gagasan-gagasan tentang tanah air terkait dengan status dan posisi kaum Muslim Jawa Ponorogo saat ini dalam masyarakat setempat? Perubahan budaya diaspora Muslim Ponorogo di Johor mempertahankan identitas budaya dan keharmonisan sosial mereka dengan masyarakat setempat. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk melihat lebih jauh proses negosiasi identitas budaya umat Islam Ponorogo dalam tradisinya. Tradisi tersebut merupakan dialektika budaya dari budaya Jawa dan Melayu. Bahkan tradisi-tradisi ini secara dinamis berubah menjadi disederhanakan, esensi tradisi budaya mereka tidak terpengaruh. Secara internal, di Johor, terkadang ada tradisi lain, tetapi tidak menghilangkan identitas Jawanya.*

**Kata Kunci :** *Identitas, Tradisi, Muslim Ponorogo.*

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## Introduction

The Javanese-Malay cultural identity has formed a distinctive identity for the Ponorogo Muslims community in Johor Malaysia. This cannot be separated from the influence of Islamization, which encourages Ponorogo people to adapt. For Instance, Reyog or Barongan as traditional art in Johor which influenced Islamization as a form of adaptation to local communities (Malays), in term of the performance of female horse dancers (*jathilan*) in their motherland were not veiled, in Johor, Malaysia almost all *jathilan* dancers used headscarves. The cultural change also appears in the ritual of *sajen* as complementary of Reyog performance in the homeland (Ponorogo) was replaced in Johor by reciting the Prophet's prayer (*Shalawat Nabi*). The department of culture and heritage also changed the story of Reyog in Johor with Prophet Sulayman's story, who can talk to animals. The dynamics of these changes gave rise to the problem of origins, continuity, and identity.

Islamization is an essential factor in changing the cultural identity and the religious identity of Ponorogo people and their descendants in Johor. On the one hand, they were identified as Javanese, but on the other hand, they were also recognized as "Malay," and they were culturally referred to as "Javanese-Malays." This problem made them negotiate with local cultures, including changing the name from those who previously used Javanese names to Arabic names as the names of Malays in Johor. The encounter between the Javanese-Ponorogo and Malay traditions makes them distinctive while maintaining the origin's heritage and adapting to the local culture. The distinctive identity of Ponorogo Muslims is interesting to study to answer some of the fundamental questions, including what has changed and what has remained of the Ponorogo Muslims' tradition in Johor, Malaysia? How do Ponorogo Muslims manage their identity and their traditions in daily life within a multi-ethnic society?

This study uses a historical approach with relies on testing, critically analyzing tapes and relics of the past that includes heuristics, verification, interpretation, and historiography. As in this research, among the primary documents that the researcher has inventoried include Malaysia State Archives. As a complement to both documentary material that has been and will be inventoried, this study will also conduct confirmatory interviews on several sources. In practice, interviews can be conducted directly or through correspondence with authoritative sources of research objects. This study will also make observations (field observations) on the locations required precious relics of Javanese scholars who are physical such as manuscripts, books, mosque buildings, boarding schools, and others. The use of documents, interviews, and field observations in this study will also include excavating existing data in communities related to the research object. Source of data in the form of oral source and written sources is essential to be explored in this research. Using these sources can be obtained data that support the research. Researchers at the next stage will verify the data sources' authenticity and credibility through historical research methods.

This study uses the theory of the identity of Stuart Hall. Hall distinguishes three conceptions of identity: (a) the enlightenment subject, (b) the sociological subject, and (c) the post-modern subject. The enlightenment subject is based on a human's conception as an individual who remains the same or identical to himself since he was

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born. The second concept of identity is related to the sociological subject, reflecting the increasing complexity of the modern world and realizing that this subject's core is not independent but is shaped by others through values, meanings, and symbols - culture. George H. Mead and symbolic interactionist figures describe interactions that shape identity in the individual. According to this view, identity is formed in the interaction between self and society and is modified in ongoing dialogue with the culture outside and its identity. In this sociological conception, identity bridges the gap between "inside" and "outside" - between the private and the public world. The third concept of identity is the subject of a modern post, which gives rise to a shift in identity. A stable identity becomes fragmented and sometimes contradicts one another due to structural and institutional changes—subject post-modern, conceptualized as not having a permanent identity. Identity is formed and transformed continuously with the cultural system that surrounds it. Subjects assume different identities at different times, not united around a coherent "self". Inside, there is a contradictory identity, engaging in a different direction, so that the identity continues to be shifted.<sup>1</sup>

Referring to Stuart Hall's view, identity is imaginary or an embodiment of imagination seen by certain parties interconnected in it. Stuart Hall explains that cultural identity can be seen from two perspectives, namely cultural identity as being and cultural identity as a process of becoming. The first is an essentialist identity, which emphasizes the similarities among a group of people. Hall argues that this definition can and does inspire feminist, anti-colonial, and anti-racist art and activism, but cannot help us comprehend colonialism's trauma. The second definition emphasizes the similarities and the differences amongst an imagined cultural group. Hall asserts that this definition is useful for understanding colonialism's trauma because it emphasizes the historical and social contingency of identity.<sup>2</sup>

## The Migration of Javanese Muslims of Ponorogo in Johor

In Malaysia, not many people know that the Javanese Muslim is divided into several groups that show their place of origin. Each region in Java has its characteristics in terms of intonation of speech (accent) and traditions. One of them is the Javanese Muslim of Ponorogo in Johor, Malaysia. The Ponorogo Muslim is a community group that dominates the area in several villages of Johor. The Javanese Muslims of Ponorogo among the Malay population is known as a community that is still strong to preserve their culture. The Javanese Muslims entered several villages in Johor in the early 1900s.<sup>3</sup>

In its development, the Ponorogo Muslims spread to several villages in Johor, one of which was in the *Kampung Parit Warijo*. The Parit Warijo began with the arrival of Warijo Joyo in 1926 from Grogol, Sawoo, Ponorogo. Part Warijo and the majority of villages around it initially were only forests. The opening of the Parit Warijo also encouraged the opening of a new area by Warijo's colleagues, such as in

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<sup>1</sup> Stuart Hall, *Modernity: An Introduction to Modern Societies* (Blackwell Publishing, 1996).

<sup>2</sup> Stuart Hall, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora Dalam Identity: Community, Culture, Difference," *London: Lawrence K. Wishart*, 1990.

<sup>3</sup> Koji Miyazaki, "Javanese-Malay: Between Adaptation and Alienation," *Sojourn: Journal of Social Issues in Southeast Asia*, 2000, 76–99.

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Parit Days and Parit Baru. The coming of Javanese people, mostly from Ponorogo in several villages in the Batu Pahat area, was also driven by Samuri Iman Rejo, later appointed as the leader of *Ketua Kampung*. The same thing is also found in the villages of the outer region of Johor, such as in Selangor at Mukim Utan Melinting inhabited by the majority of Javanese people.<sup>4</sup>

At that time, the Javanese Muslims of Ponorogo had many opportunities to open new settlements in Johor such as in Muar and Batu Pahat. For Instance, in Parit Nipah Darat, Parit Raja, Batu Pahat, was opened by Ponorogo people who came in groups in 1911 so that most of the population were descended from Ponorogo. Whereas the village of Bingen Parit was opened in 1929. Parit Bingen was taken from the name 'Bingan bin Abu Kahar' as the first village head.<sup>5</sup> So it is not surprising that the majority of the villagers to date are descendants of the Ponorogo people who are still strong in carrying out Javanese traditions and customs as they were in their homeland. Some still come to Ponorogo to visit relatives.

The Ponorogo Muslims' livelihoods initially planted rice, potatoes, and coffee as an economic source besides iron mining around the Sri Medan area. The opportunity to open more forest areas is a separate economic opportunity for the Ponorogo Muslim community by planting rubber trees and oil palm. The Javanese Muslims of Ponorogo in the Sri Medan region that have reached the seventh generation still retain their traditions. The coming of the Javanese Muslims of Ponorogo to Johor was related to the war against the Dutch. They crossed to the Malay Peninsula and came to Batu Pahat before the First World War in the Parit Raja, Parit Sulong, and Sri Medan.<sup>6</sup>

In Johor, the Javanese Muslims of Ponorogo descent still preserves their culture. Javanese spoke with a Ponorogo accent that is also maintained, but the way of life and arrangement of the village is adjusted to the Ponorogo building's character in the past. The pattern of cultural preservation is inseparable from the ongoing relationship with relatives in their homeland, Ponorogo, East Java. For local people (Malays), the advantages of the Javanese Muslims of Ponorogo in Johor are in heroic blood as "warok" figures are firmly attached to the souls of the people of Ponorogo. The blood of heroism drives the people of Ponorogo to build new settlements in Batu Pahat and Sri Medan, Johor. It can be said that around 80 percent of the population has Ponorogo descent other than ethnic groups such as Banjar and also Chinese.<sup>7</sup>

The Javanese Muslims of Ponorogo in Malaysia have some uniqueness compared to other groups even though they are of Javanese descent. One of them is from the aspect of language; the difference is noticeable. Likewise, the local traditions of each region are different from one another. Unfortunately, in Johor, the high Javanese language (Krama) is increasingly vanishing because it is not often used, and few can speak high Javanese. Nevertheless, the Javanese Muslims of Ponorogo in

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<sup>4</sup> Resident General Office Selangor, "Archive of Malaysia. Resident General Office Selangor No. Perak 8815/04. Subject: Appointment of Ketuahs or Headmen for Certain Foreign Settlers in the Mukim of Utan Melting," 1904.

<sup>5</sup> Arik Dwijayanto, "Ethnicity, Mobility, and Identity: The Emergence of Javanese Muslim Middle Class in Malaysia," ed. Nabil Chang-kuan Lin (Tainan: NCKU Taiwan, 2020), 85.

<sup>6</sup> Azrul Affandy Sobry, "Misteri Etnik Malaysia," *Kuala Lumpur: Penerbit Berita Harian*, 2012.

<sup>7</sup> Sobry.

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Johor, especially the parents, still uses the Javanese language of Ponorogo, including the younger generation. So it does not a surprise the Ponorogo descent in Johor speaking spontaneously in Malay will be replaced with Javanese if there is someone who can speak Javanese. The heavy use of Javanese in Johor, especially in Johor, which is the basis of the Javanese Muslims, makes some local people speak Javanese.<sup>8</sup>

The migration of the Javanese Muslims of Ponorogo to Johor was also a significant factor in the occurrence of cultural encounters between Javanese and Malays. There are mutual influences between Javanese and Malay culture in Johor, Malaysia.<sup>9</sup> The Javanese Muslims of Ponorogo as migrants in Malaysia also require them to adapt to the local culture. The Ponorogo Muslims culture and Malays' encounter resulted in a diversity of cultures without losing the original culture's personality element. This can be seen from some Ponorogo tradition practices in some areas of Johor Malaysia, which have their uniqueness compared to other communities. The tradition of the Muslim Javanese of Ponorogo descent in Johor that is still being carried out includes the traditions of marriage, pregnancy, and birth. This tradition eventually became part of customary law that lived in the community to affirm Ponorogo's Muslim identity in Malaysia, especially in Johor.

The factors behind the arrival of the Ponorogo Muslims in Johor, Malaysia, can be seen from two factors: push factors and pull factors. Push and pull theory considers the interaction between the factors driving from the country of origin and the factors that attract migrants to the destination country. The push factors include conditions in the country of origin, such as unemployment, poverty, limited agricultural land, political instability, and warfare, which stimulate people to migrate to other countries. The pull factors that attract migrants to destination countries include more job opportunities, higher salaries, and political stability.<sup>10</sup> The arrival of the Ponorogo Muslims to Johor can be seen from economic, religious, political, and individual factors.

Based on historical facts before the Second World War, Java has become one of the world's most densely populated agricultural regions. This situation has reached a quite dangerous situation because the increasing population has caused other more complex problems to emerge, such as the problem of land division, unemployment, debt, and poverty.<sup>11</sup> Based on land ownership, Javanese people are categorized into four classes. The first class is farmers who have rice fields, fields, and houses. The second class, the peasant who have houses and fields but do not have rice fields. The third class of the peasant only has a house but works on someone else's land. The

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<sup>8</sup> Arik Dwijayanto, "Migrasi, Adaptasi Dan Tradisi Komunitas Muslim Jawa Di Semenanjung Melayu," *Dialogia* 15, no. 2 (2017): 265, <https://doi.org/10.21154/dialogia.v15i2.1194>.

<sup>9</sup> Abid Rohmanu, "Acculturation of Javanese And Malay Islam in Wedding Tradition of Javanese Ethnic Community at Selangor, Malaysia," *KARSA: Journal of Social and Islamic Culture* 24, no. 1 (2016): 52-66.

<sup>10</sup> Everett S Lee, "A Theory of Migration," *Demography* 3, no. 1 (May 6, 1966): 47-57, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2060063>; Graeme Hugo, "Indonesian Labour Migration to Malaysia: Trends and Policy Implications," *Asian Journal of Social Science* 21, no. 1 (1993): 36-70.

<sup>11</sup> Khazin Mohd Tamrin, "Orang Jawa Di Selangor Kedatangan Dan Penempatan," *Jebat: Malaysian Journal of History, Politics & Strategic Studies* 7 (2020).

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fourth class is the peasant who does not have land and houses and lives with other people. This structure illustrates the importance of land in the lives of Javanese people. The land is the most valuable asset and determines one's class position in the village community.<sup>12</sup>

The problem of land in Java, which also impacts the economy, has been recognized by most migrants, mostly from Ponorogo in Johor. Warijo Joyo and his group migrated to Sri Medan, Johor, in 1926 to improve economic livelihoods due to the lack of employment and income opportunities in his hometown in Grogol, Sawoo Ponorogo.<sup>13</sup>

In addition to economic factors, the arrival of the Ponorogo Muslims to the Malaya Peninsula, including in Johor, was caused by pressure and oppression by the Dutch Government in the past. This pressure has been felt since the Dutch V.O.C. era. Among them are several types of taxes: personal property tax, trade tax, land tax and service tax in the form of money instead of 'personal service.' Personal property tax is a property tax charged to items in the house, especially home furnishings, as much as 2 percent of the furniture's value. In contrast, trade tax is determined based on the place of sale or building of the trade established. This tax was first imposed in 1837. Besides, various vehicles such as horses, bicycles, cars, and delmans were subjected to taxes imposed from January 01, 1908. Traditional carpentry items were also included among items subject to taxation under trade tax. Land tax is applied according to the distribution of land types between productive land such as rice fields and dry land. The amount of productive land tax costs such as rice fields is around 8 to 20 percent of crop yields. At the same time, the dry land tax amounts to 25 guilders. The amount of this tax fee is set every ten years. The head tax is a tax that is imposed as an option to replace personal services to the kingdom. The tax costs' pressure and burden have caused many Javanese to leave their hometowns to migrate to other places. The diaspora of the Javanese Muslim community, including Ponorogo to the Malay Peninsula, is one way to avoid the colonial government's pressure and tax burden.<sup>14</sup>

The arrival of the Ponorogo Muslim community to the Malay Land Peninsula was caused by economic factors and religious factors, especially the Hajj pilgrimage to Mecca. Many Hajj candidates work first to meet travel costs and meet the needs during the Hajj through the Alsagoff company agent.<sup>15</sup> After performing the Hajj, most Javanese Muslim communities, including those from Ponorogo, did not immediately return to their hometowns. Many feel more comfortable looking for livelihoods in a better way than returning to their place of birth. The opportunity to get land for free in Batu Pahat and other areas in Johor was the main attraction of

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<sup>12</sup> Khazin Mohd Tamrin, *Orang Jawa Di Selangor, Penghijrahan Dan Penempatan, 1880-1940* (Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, Kementerian Pelajaran, Malaysia, 1984).

<sup>13</sup> Sobry, "Misteri Etnik Malaysia."

<sup>14</sup> Khazin Mohd Tamrin and Sukiman Bohari, "Orang Jawa Pontian: Kedatangan Dan Kegiatannya Dalam Aspek Sosio-Ekonomi Dan Politik Tempatan," *Jebat: Malaysian Journal of History, Politics & Strategic Studies* 10 (2020).

<sup>15</sup> Ermy Azziaty Rozali, "Sayid Muhammad Al-Sagoff In Johore-Ottoman Sovereign Relations," *Advances in Natural and Applied Sciences* 6, no. 6 (2012): 893–98.

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Javanese Muslim migrants, especially after an offer to get a grant from the Sultan of Johor, Sultan Abu Bakar.<sup>16</sup>

## Identity of Ponorogo Muslims in Johor

Referring to Gronlund that Identity is something socially constructed. It can be rooted in the historical background, language, religion, a common platform found with people in similar situations, or usually a combination of all and more aspects than the ones mentioned.<sup>17</sup> For Amin Maalouf, identity cannot be partitioned because every individual has a complex identity. For example, a person born in Malaysia from a Javanese mother and father of Malay descent knows he does not have a single identity but has a plural identity. Understanding a community or society's identity in complex history is an integral part of redefining identity, especially in Malaysia's socio-political realm, which is known as a multiracial and multicultural country.<sup>18</sup> Identity in society is not permanent, static, and free from ambiguity. In certain aspects, sooner or later, the identity of an individual or group of people changes and gives time for a process of absorption and adjustment of new developing values. However, an identity will experience a large and widespread change if several factors that the community cannot control. Members cannot rely on their values and cultural resources to control life and experience moral panic.<sup>19</sup>

The Javanese Muslim of Ponorogo, as migrants in the Malay Peninsula was known easily to adapt to new environments. This is inseparable from the similarity of religious identity or spiritual ties as fellow Muslims. Nevertheless, the ethnic identity does not just disappear. Although the Javanese Muslim of Ponorogo has long lived in Malaya even until the third generation still adheres firmly to cultural identity as "Javanese" to the local community. The identity problem was experienced by the first and second generation of Javanese Muslims of Ponorogo who migrated to the Malay Peninsula. This can be seen from the Javanese names used in population identity cards (I.C.) in official terms in Malaysia, such as Miskon Karim, Marji Mohammad, and Maskon Samuri.

Identity as 'Javanese', although not embodied in administration, socio-culturally is still firmly embedded in local society. This triggered the next generation of Javanese Muslims to adapt by improving Javanese names with Malay names, especially after performing the Hajj even though they did not change one hundred percent. The next generation indirectly gave many names of their children with Arabic-Malay names. The generation of Javanese descendants today on the Peninsula rarely finds identical names to the Javanese name. Improving name is a part of adaptation, but the Javanese Muslims of Ponorogo also adapted their traditions. This

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<sup>16</sup> Awang Sariyan, "Persepsi Keturunan Jawa Di Malaysia Terhadap Bangsa Jawa Di Tanah Induknya Dalam Konteks Kekerukunan Tamadun," 2001.

<sup>17</sup> Christine Alstad Grønlund, "Refugees in Exodus: Statelessness and Identity: A Case Study of Rohingya Refugees in Aceh, Indonesia" (Universitetet i Agder; University of Agder, 2016).

<sup>18</sup> Khalid Alhathloul, "Hybridity: A Privilege of a Few or the Necessity for All in Amin Maalouf's In the Name of Identity," *Somatechnics* 6, no. 1 (2016): 24-39.

<sup>19</sup> Mohammad Maiwan, "ORANG JAWA DI SELANGOR," *Jurnal Ilmiah Mimbar Demokrasi* 10, no. 2 (2011): 24-41.

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adaptation is part of the Javanese Muslims of Ponorogo to preserve its traditions both in religious and cultural rituals.<sup>20</sup>

According to some Muslim scholars, Javanese descent in Malaysia stated that the formation and strengthening of their identity lie in the survival ability and success of the Javanese Muslims in facing diverse challenges in new places while still originating from the values of old traditions. Their ability to maintain the continuity of Javanese traditions and values is still primarily maintained. Although, at a particular stage, there are elements of the new culture absorbed as part of the interaction and contestation inevitable with other cultures that continue but do not eliminate the values adopted. As migrants, the Javanese Muslims of Ponorogo are encouraged to preserve the values of tradition and culture they have in a new place, as they are conducive and do not conflict with local values. The Javanese principle of life that upholds harmonious values is the main foundation, which provides a broad space for tolerance. The choice of consensus paths and avoiding open conflict are the main characteristics that make people and Javanese culture flexible and readily accepted everywhere. Therefore, it cannot be denied that forming Ponorogo Muslims' identity in Johor for several decades has not been monotonous and stagnant, but is dynamic, creative, and continuous.<sup>21</sup>

## Cultural Sustainability of Ponorogo Muslims in Johor

In the life of Javanese Muslims of Ponorogo in Johor, tradition becomes part of the vein that occupies an important position as a glue of social relations, as a function of tradition that provides guidelines for action gives the individual identity.<sup>22</sup> The tradition of Javanese Muslim communities in Johor is not much different from other ethnic traditions, both in harmony and religious practice. The traditions of Ponorogo Muslim descent are still strongly influenced by the traditions of origin. Nevertheless, in some aspects, it has also been strongly influenced by Malay culture. The traditions of the Muslim Javanese of Ponorogo descendants in Johor are still being carried out, including pregnancy, marriage, and harmony traditions.

The tradition of the Muslim Javanese of Ponorogo descent in Johor, although not much different from the Malay tradition, has its characteristics not found in other communities. This distinctive feature is part of the local wisdom of the Ponorogo Muslims in Johor in preserving culture and tradition as in the land of origin. Among Ponorogo Muslims' traditions in pregnancy are still carried out by Ponorogo descendants in Johor, such as *neloni*, *baritan*, and *tingkeban*.<sup>23</sup> In the pregnancy tradition for the Ponorogo Muslim descendants in Johor will hold a *slametan* for a baby who has entered the age of three months (*neloni*) using *takir* rice dish (yellow rice wrapped in a boat-shaped banana leaf). Using Javanese calculations the amount

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<sup>20</sup> Jean-Marc De Grave, "Naming as a Dynamic Process: The Case of Javanese Personal Names," *Indonesia and the Malay World* 39, no. 113 (2011): 69-88; Joel C Kuipers, "Islamization and Identity in Indonesia: The Case of Arabic Names in Java," *Indonesia* 103, no. 1 (2017): 25-49.

<sup>21</sup> Maiwan, "ORANG JAWA DI SELANGOR."

<sup>22</sup> Miftahul Huda, "Membangun Model Bernegosiasi Dalam Tradisi Larangan-Larangan Perkawinan Jawa," *Epistemé: Jurnal Pengembangan Ilmu Keislaman* 12, no. 2 (2017): 381-409.

<sup>23</sup> Kamdi Kamil and Noriah Mohamed, *Masyarakat Keurunan Jawa Johor* (Yayasan Warisan Johor, 2021).



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of *takir* is made based on the day of his birth. For example, the Javanese calculation is known as the birthday of a 17-year-old baby, so 17 pads of *takir* rice were provided. Giving *takir* rice to the neighbors informs them that their child is pregnant and the neighbor also knows that the womb has reached three months. When the womb enters seven months, the husband and wife need to be bathed with seven flower water kinds. The water is also given perfume and there are special readings for cleaning up. This means that babies who are born are healthy and clean. In Johor, the ritual reading uses verses from the Quran. The other tradition of Javanese Muslims of Ponorogo in Johor when a husband splits a young coconut when his wife contains seven months and is witnessed by neighbors to see the part of the coconut being split. This is even though, according to some old beliefs (myths), the tradition of splitting coconuts is related to the sex of the child. However, along with the increasing understanding of religion and the progress of the times, this belief or myth is no longer used as a reference.<sup>24</sup>

The other tradition that the Javanese of Ponorogo in Johor still preserve is making 'ambeng' for specific events in preparation for a wedding ceremony. In preparing for the wedding celebration there is the '*rewang*' tradition, an activity that involves all community members, both old, young, male, and female. Those involved in the *rewang* tradition will be given responsibility according to the division of tasks such as cooking, washing dishes, receiving guests, and arranging chairs. In the tradition of *rewang*, the concept of 'old age' is applied. Older people are only assigned as recipients while the younger generation, especially men, are given the task of bringing food from the kitchen to guests. For the girls to be assigned to help provide food dishes to the guests. The majority of adult women or mothers are involved in helping prepare ingredients. Usually, the mothers who will go to this *rewang* have brought their kitchen knife. Usually, they contribute energy and usually carry kitchen items such as cooking oil, sugar, and rice, but many also prefer to donate in the form of money.<sup>25</sup>

As for harmonious traditions that carried out by the Javanese Muslims of Ponorogo in Johor include "*rambutan*" (discussion when there will be a celebration such as marriage), "*sambatan*" (cooperation in building a house), "*jagong*" (visiting family or neighbors who have new babies). The Muslim Javanese of Ponorogo often held cooperation in cleaning mosques and tombs. Likewise, when welcoming Eid al-Fitr usually hold a "*takbiran*" together at surau or mosque.<sup>26</sup>

Another tradition that is maintained by Ponorogo descent in Johor, namely Reyog, or known as Barongan. This traditional art was introduced to the local community in 1901, especially in the Mukim XI by Saikon Kentos. He came from Ponorogo to Johor and settled in the Perpat village. The term 'Perpat' is thought to originate from the Javanese language 'merpat', which means various ethnic groups. Besides Ponorogo descent who live in this village, there are also other communities such as Bugis, Banjars, and Malays. Considering the majority of the population of the village are Ponorogo people, Barongan quickly develops in Johor. Reyog or Barongan is used as entertainment and other arts such as shadow puppets (*wayang kulit*) and

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<sup>24</sup> Sobry, "Misteri Etnik Malaysia."

<sup>25</sup> Kamil and Mohamed, *Masyarakat Keurunan Jawa Johor*.

<sup>26</sup> Kamil and Mohamed.

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braid horses (kuda kepong). The horse braid dance or kuda kepong is believed to be part of Barongan's art performances but is now staged separately.<sup>27</sup>

Reyog or Barongan arts also shape the identity of the Ponorogo descendants in Malaysia as part of cultural identity. Along with the times, some Barongan figures in Johor made modifications to both the clothing and dance movements to suit the traditions of Malay people in Malaysia, such as in horse dancer clothes or *jathilan*, they have adapted to the culture of Malay society in Johor. *Warok* figures are also not used in the Reyog performance in Johor.<sup>28</sup>

Formerly in Johor, before the Reyog performance was held both in an event, rituals were usually performed by burning incense (kemenyan). *Sajen* is a magical ritual carried out to safeguard the audience. *Sajen* as an open stage ritual is also used in shadow puppet or wayang kulit performance. Every village is believed to have its own 'waiting' and asking permission from the residents to become a common practice before the show begins. Each offering usually includes one banana plantain, coconut which has been shelled, rice, one-tailed roast chicken, incense, perfume, cigarettes, matches, and *cok bakal*.<sup>29</sup>

Since the Ponorogo people's religious knowledge has begun to strengthen, the ritual of *sajen* in the Reyog performance in Johor has been replaced by reciting the Prophet's prayer (*shalawat*). The ritual of *sajen* was changed after the Reyog players learned that the ritual of *sajen* was contrary to Islam's teachings. Until now, the ritual of *sajen* was never performed in Reyog's performances in Johor. Reyog in Johor is no more entertainment for the villagers who are not influenced by particular political interests. It only serves to enliven events both formal and non-formal events. Reyog for the Ponorogo descent in Johor is not only a dance but more than a traditional theater among today's modern society, which is better understood as a drama theater. The structure of Reyog's performance in certain circumstances can be adjusted based on several factors, including factors such as place, time, audience, and the invitee are part of the consideration of the duration of the performance, including determining the style of the show.<sup>30</sup>

In terms of stories performed according to several heads of the Reyog group in Johor based on the story of a king's journey and his bodyguard who would propose to the king's daughter. As oral histories, Reyog stories also changes from generation to generation. Reyog in Johor also strongly influenced Islamization as a form of adaptation to the local community's conditions. If the female horse dancer (*jathilan*) in her motherland is not veiled, in Johor, almost all *jathilan* dancers use the hijab. Although veiled, it does not affect and change the style of dance and rhythm of the show. Likewise with the character *Warok* in the Reyog show in Johor wearing a black shirt with a red shirt with white stripes with long black pants, while in Ponorogo, the character *Warok* in the performance did not wear a shirt, only long black pants with

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<sup>27</sup> Dwijayanto, "Migrasi, Adaptasi Dan Tradisi Komunitas Muslim Jawa Di Semenanjung Melayu."

<sup>28</sup> Sobry, "Misteri Etnik Malaysia."

<sup>29</sup> Dwijayanto, "Migrasi, Adaptasi Dan Tradisi Komunitas Muslim Jawa Di Semenanjung Melayu."

<sup>30</sup> Arik Dwijayanto, "PRIBUMISASI ISLAM NUSANTARA: ANTARA NALAR BERAGAMA DAN GERAKAN SOSIAL KEAGAMAAN DI INDONESIA," *QALAMUNA: Jurnal Pendidikan, Sosial, Dan Agama* 9, no. 02 (2017): 71-92; Sobry, "Misteri Etnik Malaysia."

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large straps. The tiger's head, which is the main element of Reyog's or Barongan's head in Johor has also been adjusted between 15-20 kg, while in Ponorogo, the weight can reach 60 kg, so not everyone can play. Other adaptations that stand out for the public interest of the Malaysian government as part of the local cultural heritage, as reported in the online media of Malaysian Culture and Arts Department, which states that Reyog or Barongan in Johor tells the story of Prophet Sulayman who can talk to animals despite things Reyog's group opposed this in Johor and also in the motherland, Ponorogo. The story of Reyog or Barongan was Islamized to be readily accepted by other communities outside the Ponorogo community. According to the local Malay culture, some Ponorogo traditions in Johor were adapted by adjustments, simplifications, and changes.<sup>31</sup>

From Woodward's perspective, Islamic dialectics and Javanese traditions have taken place on a regenerative basis. Their relationship creates a unique existence. In traditional connection with theology, some Javanese customary rituals are considered 'deviant' or labeled *syirik*. Hence, the tendency requires an attempt to adjust or compromise action between traditions with the local community's rules (Islamic law). Such dialectics can be categorized in the model of compromising theology. This can be seen from the shift in the pattern of theology from naturalistic to formalistic.<sup>32</sup>

## Conclusion

Cultural changes of Ponorogo Muslims are closely related to Islamization's influence by the Malay society in Johor. On the one hand, the cultural change is part of an adaptation to maintain the group's identity as a Ponorogo descendant in Johor. On the other hand, the cultural change shows the existence of cultural crossing between Java and Malay without eliminating the identity of the origin of the tradition. Cultural sustainability in the diasporic experience of the Ponorogo Muslims in Johor became social capital to strengthen their group identity without ignoring the national identity as Malaysian citizens. Ponorogo's Muslim diaspora in Johor has shown a harmony of traditions that do not dominate each other to survive and develop until now without conflict. The cultural changes of the Ponorogo Muslims diaspora in Johor were to maintain their cultural identity and social harmony with the local society. The negotiation process of cultural identity among Ponorogo Muslims in Johor is a key in maintaining their tradition. Even though the tradition is a cultural dialectics of Javanese and Malay culture, even these traditions are dynamically changing to be simplified, the essence of their cultural tradition is not affected. Internally, in Johor, sometimes there are other traditions, but they do not take their Javanese identity off.

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<sup>31</sup> Dwijayanto, "Migrasi, Adaptasi Dan Tradisi Komunitas Muslim Jawa Di Semenanjung Melayu"; Maftukhin Maftukhin, "Islam Jawa in Diaspora and Questions on Locality," *Journal of Indonesian Islam* 10, no. 2 (2016): 375-94.

<sup>32</sup> Mark Woodward, "Islam in Java: Normative Piety and Mysticism in the Sultanate of Yogyakarta," in *Islam in Java: Normative Piety and Mysticism in the Sultanate of Yogyakarta* (University of Arizona Press, Tucson; Association for Asian Studies Monograph, 45, 1989).

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