

# Arab Ethnic Traditions Toward The Wedding: Analysis of The Meaning of The "Rahatan" Tradition in The Scope of The Arab Ethnic Family In The Arab Village of Besuki Religious and Social-Cultural Perspective

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## ABSTRACT

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*Traditions are actions carried out by a group of people that are passed down from generation to generation. Indonesia, with its various tribes or ethnicities, certainly has different traditions according to forms of expression and adaptation to the natural contours it inhabits. This tradition is always realized to preserve the teachings of the ancestors, the same as the tradition that exists in the Arab ethnic group, specifically in the Arab village of Bondowoso. The Rahatan tradition is apparently still well preserved by Arab ethnic families. If you look at this tradition, it is almost the same as the tradition in India before a wedding, namely the mehendi ceremony which has a special meaning for the bride and groom before the wedding. In this research, there are two important questions, including, 1) What is the tradition of Rahatan within the scope of the Arab Ethnic Family? 2) What is the meaning contained in the Arab Ethnic Family's ritual of worship in the Besuki Arab Village from a religious and social cultural perspective. The approach used is qualitative with case study research methods and multidisciplinary analysis with descriptive analysis data processing to find out more than one point of view, namely social and cultural. This research aims to provide information regarding the meaning of the Rahatan tradition which is always realized by Arab ethnic families. The conclusion of this research is that the tradition of Rahatan has been carried out by Arab ethnic families from generation to generation to this day, which has a special meaning and has a correlation with social culture.*

**Keywords:** *Keywords: Tradition, Rahatan, Arab Ethnicity, Social Culture*

## INTRODUCTION

Indonesia has the characteristics of a heterogeneous society in several aspects, such as the diversity of religions, ethnicities, cultures, customs and regional languages that other nations do not have. This diversity gives rise to the unique characteristics of the Indonesian nation which creates both pride and challenge for its diverse society. Culture, customs and traditions are a form of societal reality which includes life values and norms which have a significant role and influence in life. In several places that are included in customary areas, both culture and tradition are manifestations of local values or local wisdom which not only reflect creativity, but also include the social reflection of the community. This has resulted in many regions and regions still adhering to traditionalist values, such as in thinking, behaving and behaving, as well as matters relating to culture, customs and traditions which are often used as a guide to life, and can be said to be sacred so that they can inviting the obedience of many people. Etymologically, tradition means an attachment between the past and the present in the form of knowledge, doctrine and forms of practice that are passed on from generation to generation. Terminologically, tradition is something that is created, practiced or believed, such as the work of the human mind, beliefs or ways of thinking, forms of social relations, technology, man-made equipment or natural objects that can be used as objects of a transmission process. The element of continuity or transmission is important in tradition. If the tradition does not have an element of transmission or continuity that can be passed on or shared to the next generation, then it is certain that the tradition will be lost as time goes by (Hasan & Susanto, 2021, p. 4).

Tradition is closely related to culture. According to Law (UU) Number 5 of 2017 concerning the Advancement of Culture, culture is everything related to creativity, taste, initiative and the results of

society's work (UU No. 5 of 2017). Culture is created not by itself, but by interaction with other people or other groups and adapted to the environment in which one lives. Each group has different and varied traditions, sometimes some are similar depending on how they interact and the environment they live in. Traditions owned by each community group also of course have certain meanings which are a form of attitude of adjustment to environmental dynamics or as a form of meaning regarding concepts, principles and beliefs within that community group. In line with this, culture is generally said to be adaptive, because culture equips humans with ways of adapting to the physiological needs of their bodies, and adapting to the physical-geographical environment as well as the social environment (Syakharani & Kamil, 2022, p. 788).

According to Soesanti, ethnic Arabs in Indonesia are a minority group in Indonesian society. In general, they have a culture that is influenced by values from Arab countries, which are different from the culture of the majority of the Indonesian population (Allam & Ninin, 2023, p. 244). The ethnic Arabs who live in Besuki Situbondo come from the Hadrami Arab ethnicity. They migrated to Indonesia via trade routes. The arrival of the Hadrami Arabs to Besuki was via the sea route which anchored at the Besuki port located in the villages of Pesisir, Tamporah and Pacaron. They used the sea route because at that time the sea route was considered cheaper than the land route (Firdausya et al., 2015, p. 5). The arrival of the Hadrami Arab ethnic group in Besuki can be said to have received a good reception from the Madurese ethnic group, who were the first to migrate to the Besuki area. At that time, the Madurese ethnic group had great respect for the Arab ethnic group, which was considered a special group of descendants of the Prophet Muhammad. The privileges possessed by the Arab ethnic group invited local people and nobles to marry their daughters to Arab traders. (Firdausya et al., 2015, p. 6). According to Muchsin in Firdausya et al. apart from the assumption of a special lineage for the Arab ethnic group, another thing that encouraged the existence of mixed Arab and Madurese ethnic marriages was because of the biological needs of Hadrami Arab immigrants and coincidentally at that time not a single ethnic Arab trader brought a wife and family to Indonesia. Arab culture that is now maintained is the spirit of maintaining their identity. In Indonesia, the Arab ethnic community continues to grow and tries to maintain their group identity. One of the traditions they practice is preserving their offspring by marrying within their own Arab ethnic group or also known as the endogamous marriage tradition (Rifqiyati, 2020, p. 27).

Apart from that, the Rahatan tradition is still well preserved by Arab ethnic families. If you look at this tradition, it is almost the same as the tradition in India before a wedding, namely the mehendi ceremony which has a special meaning for the bride and groom before the wedding. Laylat al-rahatan tradition on the night before the wedding (pre-wedding) carried out by ethnic Arabs. Laylat al-rahatan tradition is a celebration that is usually held one or two days before the wedding day. In its implementation, this celebration contains two elements, namely release and joy. This renunciation means leaving the role or status as a daughter in the family and turning to become a wife, and the element of joy means feelings of happiness before marriage, where marriage is interpreted as happiness because of the union of a pair of people who love each other.

The religious view in viewing a tradition has certain limitations, as in the hadith from Umar radhiyallahu anhu, Rasulullah sallallahu alaihi wa sallam said,

بعثت بين يدي الساعة بالسيف حتى يعبد الله تعالى وحده لا شريك له و جعل رزقي تحت ظل رمحي و جعل الذل و الصغار على من خالف أمري و من تشبه بقوم فهو منهم

*"I was sent with a sword on the eve of the Day of Resurrection so that they worship Allah Ta'ala alone and associate nothing with Him, and have been made my sustenance under the shadow of my spear, made humiliation and humiliation for anyone who disagrees with me. And whoever resembles a people is part of them" (HR Ahmad, authenticated by Al Albani) (Pratama, 2014).*

In the hadith above, it can be concluded that if the tradition or celebration carried out resembles the tradition or celebration carried out by a group of infidel communities then it can be deemed haram or not permitted because it indirectly belongs to that group of people, but if the tradition or celebration resembles a group of people who are classified as pagans but not related to traditional religious activities or celebrations can be permitted.

This research uses a literature review to prove the novelty of the research. The literature review in this research uses Google Scholar to search for previous research which will later prove the existence of novelty in this research. First, research entitled "Endogamous Marriage Among Arab Ethnic Women in Indonesia" conducted by Muhammad Haidar Allam and Retno Haanggarani Ninin. This research discusses the tradition of endogamous marriage among Arab ethnic women in Indonesia using qualitative research methods in the form of a literature study. (Allam & Ninin, 2023) This research shows that this tradition has a negative impact on the health and well-being of Arab ethnic women which can cause problems. mental health, stigmatization, discrimination and lack of rights in choosing a life partner. Novelty in this research is the difference in the traditional objects studied and the type of research used.

Second, research entitled "Dynamics of Endogamous Marriage among Arab Descendants in Yogyakarta" conducted by Dewi Ulya Rifqiyati. This research discusses the dynamics of endogamous marriages of Arab descendants in Yogyakarta which results in the fact that there has been a push-pull relationship in endogamous marriages towards exogamy (Rifqiyati, 2020). The research update based on this research is that there are differences in the traditional objects studied.

Third, research entitled "Educative Value in Reading Burdah (Study of Arab Ethnic Wedding Processions in Gorontalo)" conducted by Muh. Wise. This research describes the educational values of the tradition or habit of reading burdah for Arab ethnic groups in Gorontalo during wedding processions using descriptive qualitative ethnographic research. In this research, there are several updates between the research carried out by the author, namely the differences in the traditional objects studied even though they come from the same ethnicity, then there are differences in the loci and types of research used. Apart from the differences, there are also similarities in this research, namely looking at the socio-cultural and religious aspects of the traditions carried out by these ethnic groups.

Fourth, research entitled "Development of Social and Cultural Life of Communities of Arab-Madurese Ethnic Descendants in Besuki Arab Village, Situbondo Regency, 1881-2014" conducted by Alfin Rhizka Firdausya, Sugiyanto, and Sumardi. This research aims to analyze the background and initial process of the arrival of Arab and Madurese ethnicities to Besuki, to analyze the process of mixing between Arab and Madurese ethnicities in terms of social and cultural life in the Besuki Arab village, and to analyze how the social and cultural life of ethnic descendants develops. Arab-Madurese in the Besuki Arab village using historical research methods (Firdausya et al., 2015, p. 1). The difference that can be found in this research is that there is a broader scope relating to the initial arrival of the Arab-Madurese ethnic group, acculturation and assimilation between the Arab-Madurese ethnic group and its development, whereas in the research conducted by the author it was only limited to studying the meanings of tradition. Ramadan held for ethnic Arabs in the Arab village of Besuki. The similarities that can be found in this research are the research subjects, namely the Arab ethnic group in the Besuki Arab village.

## **METHOD**

This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study type of research and uses multidisciplinary analysis techniques. According to Rahmat, the qualitative approach is a procedure for obtaining data from a linguistic phenomenon which produces findings that are presented in descriptive form and these findings cannot be obtained through statistical procedures. This approach is directed at a natural and holistic setting so as not to "isolate" individuals or organizations into variables or hypotheses (Ridlo, 2023, p. 22). The use of a qualitative approach in this research aims to obtain data, explore data, and produce findings about the Rahatan tradition which are then presented in descriptive form. Based on the literature review that has been carried out, this research is included in the type of exploratory research because the research aims to describe the meanings of the Arab ethnic Rahatan tradition in the Besuki Arab village, which is an object that until now there has been no research that explores this. Exploratory research is research conducted to look for ideas, new relationships from certain phenomena (Purba & Simanjuntak, 2011, p. 17).

A case study is research in which the researcher explores a particular phenomenon (case) at a certain time and activity (program, event, process, institution or social group) and collects detailed and in-depth information using various data collection procedures over a certain period (Wahyuningsih, 2013 , p. 3). The use of this type of case study research in this research is to explore research data in the form of cases

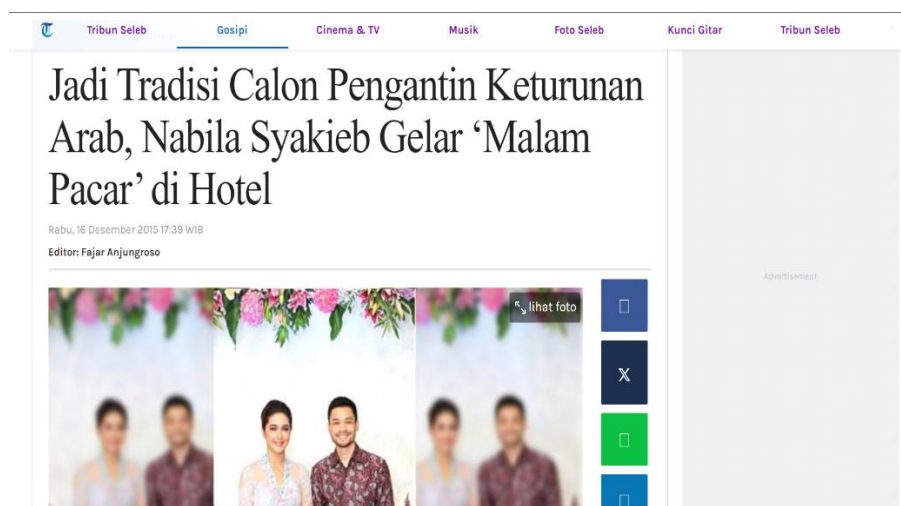
at a time when these cases occur and activities which can be in the form of programs, events, processes or social groups, where the particular phenomenon or case in this research is the Rahatan tradition. Multidisciplinary analysis is a way of discussing problems that involves several scientific disciplines to discuss the same topic (Rahmah, 2016, p. 2) by using multidisciplinary analysis it can be said that what is studied in this.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### A. Rahatan Tradition in the Scope of Arab Ethnic Families

Marriage is a sacred moment for the prospective bride and groom in starting their married life, this cannot be separated from the wedding ceremonies of each region. Each region has unique wedding customs and their meanings which must be carried out to preserve traditions from generation to generation. Likewise with Arab ethnic wedding traditions, namely henna nights or henna parties. Henna night is a procession undertaken by brides of Arab descent, including in Indonesia, before the wedding ceremony takes place. The henna night tradition in western countries is known as a bridal shower, while in India it is known as a henna night. In this henna night tradition, family and friends will apply henna to the fingers, palms and wrists of the prospective bride and groom with various unique and interesting motifs. Then, the application of henna is accompanied by joint prayer and recitation, then closed by dancing a belly dance together or what is called Rahatan. There are several differences in the implementation of Malam Pacar in its countries of origin in the Middle East and in Malay countries, such as Indonesia. In the area of origin, this henna night tradition is held one to two weeks before the wedding, whereas in Malay countries such as Indonesia it is held only one day before the wedding. The unique thing that is usually found in the girlfriend's night process is that they will dance the zafin to liven up the event, a dance that involves moving their legs back and forth as if they were facing each other. This dance is usually accompanied by gambus music, which is a characteristic of traditional Arab ethnic family weddings. The presence of gambus music cannot be separated from traditional Arab ethnic family weddings to accompany songs with Arabic poetry.

The henna night tradition is also carried out by Celebrity Nabila Syakieb, a girl of Arab descent. This henna night tradition is held at the Savero Garden Hotel, Jalan Padjajaran, Bogor City, West Java. This henna night tradition goes through several series of events such as recitation of the Koran, followed by siraman and a "boyfriend night" event before the wedding.



The tradition of henna nights is currently starting to develop, not only among Arab ethnic families in Indonesia, but also among non-Arabs, as is done by celebrity Aurel Hermansyah.



The Henna Night held by celebrity Aurel Hermansyah proved that the tradition of Rahatan is starting to develop not only among ethnic Arab families. Reporting from the site above, the reason celebrity Aurel Hermansyah held Henna Night was to preserve traditions and as a momentum to gather or build friendships between friends and closest relatives. Apart from that, this Henna Night is held to expect good prayers in the wedding procession and to receive advice about building a *sakinah*, *mawaddah*, *warahmah* family.

## B. The Meaning of the Arab Ethnic Rahatan Tradition of Besuki Arab Village from Religious and Socio-Cultural Perspectives

The tradition of henna nights is still very much embedded within the Arab Ethnic Family in Besuki, Situbondo. In Arab Ethnic Families in Besuki, the tradition of henna night has a different term, namely the Rahatan tradition. This cannot be denied because the majority of the population is Arab, so they try to preserve this tradition until the next regeneration. Apart from that, something that is perhaps very striking about Arabs is that girls who are born into ethnic Arab families are limited in accessing social life outside, such as not being able to leave the house unless accompanied by their parents, so that when the tradition of having a prayer before the wedding is held it becomes a momentum. which is very valuable for them to gather with their friends outside the home. In an effort to preserve the tradition of Rahatan, ethnic Arab families always try to carry out this tradition every time there is a wedding procession.

From the results of an interview conducted with one of the informants who incidentally was an Arab in Besuki, it was found that the Rahatan tradition could also be called a girlfriend's night or henna party. This Rahatan tradition is a much awaited moment for girls because with this Rahatan they can leave the house and stay in touch. The Rahatan tradition has the meaning of releasing the girl, as a symbol that the woman's relatives have given their blessing to the bride to hold the wedding which is held the night before the wedding. Apart from that, the informant also said that the Rahatan tradition is also open to the public, meaning that non-Arabs can also attend the Rahatan to give good prayers to the bride in building a household. The Rahatan tradition in Besuki is always carried out when relatives are getting married, this is to preserve this tradition. As time progresses, it becomes more modern, the concept of the Rahatan tradition becomes increasingly different from the previous core tradition. The most important thing in the Rahatan tradition is, applying henna to the prospective bride, accompanied by praying together for the prospective bride, giving gifts from relatives or family and then closing with dancing together accompanied by harp music as a symbol of happiness at the wedding. So, the existence of this Rahatan tradition has a positive impact on the prospective bride, namely that the more relatives who pray for her, it will bring blessings to the prospective bride as well as in her household life.

Then what is the religious view regarding the tradition of Rahatan in the Arab ethnic family? Firstly, there are several ulama figures who allow this tradition of rahatan to be carried out but while maintaining Islamic law, including that rahatan cannot be seen or shown to those who are not their mahrom. Second, when it comes to dressing, you must remain polite, namely by wearing clothes that cover your private parts and do not cause lust between members of the same sex. Third, maintain privacy by not posting holiday events on social media. These three important things must be considered, so that in an effort to preserve the Rahatan tradition it does not violate Islamic law as it should. Then, Rahatan is viewed from a socio-cultural perspective, considering that the population in Besuki consists of various tribes such as Javanese, Madurese, Arabs and with various cultural diversity, which also produces diverse traditions from each group, one of which is the Arab Ethnic Group. who are of Arab descent, so that various traditions have emerged within the Arab ethnic family in order to maintain and strengthen the existence of the Arab ethnic family in the social environment by preserving these traditions, especially Rahatan.

The important thing to know is that the Rahatan tradition in Besuki is open to the public, meaning that this event can be attended by all groups so that this tradition also becomes a bridge for fellow brothers and sisters in Islam to build friendships between both ethnic Arab and non-Arab ethnic family relatives. Apart from that, in the Rahatan tradition there is a splashing procession which is usually carried out before or after the Rahatan tradition takes place. Where siraman is also part of Javanese traditional culture in wedding processions, this proves that the rahatan tradition in Arab Ethnic Families can coexist and collaborate with other cultures as a complement to the procession before the wedding without eliminating the rahatan tradition as the identity of the wedding within the scope of the Arab Ethnic Family in Besuki . The Arab Ethnic Family in Besuki currently believes that the Rahatan tradition will continue to develop, be realized and be preserved for the next generation to maintain the identity of the Arab Ethnic Family amidst the cultural diversity of other ethnic groups while still referring to Islamic law in the process of implementing the Rahatan tradition.

## CONCLUSION

The Rahatan tradition is a culture that has been carried out and even preserved from generation to generation to this day by Arab ethnic families in Besuki, in order to maintain the existence and identity of Arab ethnic families. This tradition has the meaning of releasing the girl before the wedding as a symbol of blessing from the woman's family towards the bride as she sails the household ship. From a religious point of view, the Rahatan tradition is permitted as long as it does not violate Islamic law in the implementation process. Thus, it can be concluded that the Rahatan tradition has a correlation with religion and social culture, namely in providing good prayers from relatives for the bride from all walks of life as well as establishing friendship.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The completion of this research was inseparable from several parties, namely research informants, supervisors, and support from friends. The researcher would like to thank the research informants who were willing to provide valid information regarding the topics raised by the researcher. Then, thank you to the supervisor for guiding this research so that it can be completed well as well as all your friends' support in completing this research.

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