

MUKENA IN MADURESE SOCIAL LIFE

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Abstract: *Mukena* is a well-known typical dress for Indonesian Muslim women in conducting prayers. *Mukena* is taken for granted as a daily routine dress that did not receive much attention from many people in a more in-depth study, so it needed to be highlighted to the field of research. This study aims to determine two sides, namely, the meaning of dress in religious social life as well as to find out the meaning of *mukena* for Madurese. This study uses qualitative field research method. The sources of data are obtained from interviews and literature studies confined to things that only have relevance to this research. Using purposive sampling, the informants taken in this study were Madurese Muslim women from both santri and non-santri groups. The results discovered in this study are that Madurese Muslim woman interpret clothes, including; as a part of social ethics, as a cover of *aurat* as well as an affirmation of social identity in a community. The meaning of *mukena* for Madurese Muslim women includes the following; *mukena* as a cultural tradition, as a form of self-sacralization, and as an affirmation of identity for Muslim women.

Keywords: Culture; *mukena*; religion.

Introduction

Religion and culture are two different entities that are related to one another, and are inseparable from human beings. Culture is

closely related to human creations, while religion is the final product from God as the creator of the universe.¹ Culture is particular and relative in nature, in contrast to religion which is universal and absolute.² Culture is the result of human reasoning that is formed to meet human needs, both physical and spiritual. While reason becomes the engine of culture, because culture is the manifestation of human reason so that only humans have culture. Thus, culture is human behavior in changing one reality into another.³

Culture is a broader domain than tradition, while tradition is a crystallization of understanding⁴ and a part of culture in a narrower scope. Tradition is a custom passed down from their ancestors that is still practiced in society. Traditions can be formed from the embodiment of religion in human life through the interpretation of the teachings of the holy book.⁵ After the process of interpretation and becoming a thought and behavior, then it is maintained in the form of a tradition.⁶ The use of *mukena* when praying is included in the embodiment of religion in the worship life of Indonesian Muslim women.

The way Indonesian Muslim women cover their genitals looks varied, different from one another. This is possible as an expression of a different understanding of the embodiment of Islamic teachings in life. Indonesia has a diversity of cultures which is always interesting to study and research.⁷ It is none other than to make ends meet. So, the media or things that are complementary to the implementation of obligatory worship are part of culture.⁸

Islam in Indonesia is Islam that remains adjacent to the traditions and culture that existed before Islam came, namely

¹ Nur Syam, *Madzhab-Madzhab Antropologi* (Yogyakarta: LKiS Group, 2011), 29.

² Kastolani and Abdullah Yusof, "Relasi Islam dan Budaya Lokal Studi Tentang Tradisi Nyadran di Desa Sumogawe Kecamatan Getasan Kabupaten Semarang," *Kontemplasi*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (2016), 52.

³ Khadziq, *Islam dan Budaya Lokal* (Yogyakarta: Teras, 2009), 30.

⁴ Nafisul Atho' and Arif Fahrudin, *Hermeneutika Transcendental: Dari Konfigurasi Filosofis Menuju Praksis Islamic Studies* (Yogyakarta: Ircisod, 2003), 139.

⁵ Saifuddin Zuhri Qudsy, "Living Hadis: Genealogi, Teori, dan Aplikasi," *Jurnal Living Hadis*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (2016), 178.

⁶ Khadziq, *Islam*, 43.

⁷ Qudsy, "Living Hadis," 178.

⁸ Khadziq, *Islam*, 33.

Hindu-Buddhism and successfully converted to Islam by Walisongo as the spread of Islam on the island of Java in the last quarter of the 15th century, around 1440.⁹ They teach Islam slowly, not necessarily erasing all existing cultures and traditions considering that Indonesian people are known as loyal individuals and find it difficult to change ingrained habits.

Indonesian Muslim women have a special tradition of dress that is only used in prayer, these clothes are known as *mukena*. *Mukena* is a cloth sewn and shaped in such a way as to cover the entire body so that only the face and palms are loosely made to fulfill the legal requirements of women's dress for prayer.¹⁰ *Mukena* is only used by Malay Muslim women around Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore; in Malaysia and Singapore it is known as *telekung*.¹¹ When all Muslims from all corners of the world gather to perform the pilgrimage, we will see that the *mukena* users are only Malay Muslim women. This is an easy way of proving that *mukenas* only exist in that place in the world.

Mukena as clothes for prayer is an interesting phenomenon for religious and cultural studies in Indonesia. Although this *mukena* tradition is a common characteristic for Muslim women in Indonesia when praying, researchers need to select one particular area to reveal this phenomenon specifically and deeply. The Madura region was chosen as the research location for several reasons. Among them, there is a strong connection between Islamic teachings and the culture of the Madurese people.

The Madurese community has a view of life that cannot be separated from religious values. They live in a cultural environment that is deeply rooted in every aspect of individual and group life. Sociological facts show that the majority of Madurese are Muslim. Islamic identity is integrated into the daily life of the Madurese. This is indicated in their clothes, namely *samper* (long cloth), *kebaya*, and *burqa'* (veil) for women, while *sarong* (sarong) and *songko'* (cap or skullcap) for men have become symbols of Islam, especially in

⁹ Noni Mirantika and Saortua Marbun, "Pengaruh Modernisasi terhadap Perkembangan Komodifikasi Mukena," *Jurnal Studi Kultura*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (2016), 3.

¹⁰ Ali Tantowi, "The Quest of Indonesian Muslim Identity: Debates on Veiling from the 1920s to 1940s," *Journal of Indonesian Islam*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (2010), 69.

¹¹ Linda B. Arthur, *Undressing Religion: Dress, Body Culture* (New York: Berg, 2000), 175.

rural areas.¹² Therefore, researchers are interested in starting research on *mukena* in social and religious life for Madurese Muslim women.

The focus in this study is divided into two, namely, the meaning of dress in religious social life for Madurese Muslim women and the reasons for Madurese Muslim women to use *mukena* in their prayers. The purpose of this research is to describe the meaning of dress for Madurese Muslim women in the social context of religion, namely to reveal the meaning of dress in the context of covering their genitals outside prayer as well as explaining and scientifically explaining the reasons for Madurese Muslim women to use *mukena* as special dress in prayer.

Madurese Culture and Society

Islam first entered and spread in Madura in the 16th century before the Majapahit kingdom collapsed in 1572. Islamization efforts progressed rapidly after Madura in the second half of the 16th century, namely after Demak collapsed. Madura Island has close ties with Gresik and Surabaya, where Islamic religious leaders, Sunan Giri and Sunan Ampel live.¹³ According to historical records, the one who was ordered to preach to remote areas of Java and Madura by Sunan Ampel was Sunan Giri who was born in 1442 and then his students continued the *da'wah* afterwards.¹⁴ However, according to sources from the Netherlands, Islam had entered Madura since the 12th century, along with the coming of Islam to Java, evidenced by the grave of Siti Fatimah Binti Maimun in Gresik. Gresik, Tuban, and Kalianget¹⁵ were ports that were crowded with foreign traders, and the port was the beginning of the spread of Islam in the archipelago.¹⁶

As for the use of the term *mukena* according to G.F. Pijper a Dutch historian, the term was first used in Indonesia in 1870 by Sundanese Muslim women. In Betawi it is called *telekung* or *mukena*,

¹² Ibid., 3.

¹³ Huub de Jonge, *Madura dalam Empat Zaman: Pedagang, Perkembangan Ekonomi, dan Islam* (Jakarta: PT Gramedia, 1989), 46-47.

¹⁴ Samsul Ma'arif, *The History of Madura* (Yogyakarta: Araska, 2015), 145.

¹⁵ One of Sub-districts in Sumenep, Madura.

¹⁶ Ma'arif, *The History*, 143.

while in Javanese it is called *rukub*¹⁷ while Muslim Aceh Telekom call or *selekong*. Minangkabau Muslim women call it *tilakong*, while Madura Muslim women call it *rokob*. Muslim Malaysia has its own terms that are almost similar to the term in the Minang and Aceh which is the veil that means the exact same content with cotton.¹⁸

The word *mukena* is basically a loan word from Arabic, *miqna'* which means covering. In Ibn al-Mandhūr's *Lisān al-'Arab* dictionary, *miqna'* is described as a woman's dress to cover her head and other parts of her body.¹⁹ When adapted to Indonesian, the meaning changes as we can see in *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia* published in 1988 that *mukena* is defined as the head and body covering cloth for women to be worn during prayers.²⁰

Definitively, there are several definitions of culture expressed by its characters. According to Koentjaraningrat, it is the whole system, ideas, actions and results of human work in the context of human life by way of learning. So, it means that culture is what results from the human learning process. Actions learned, like how to eat, drink, dress, communicate, grow crops and relate to society are part of culture.²¹ In contrast to Koentjaraningrat, Sidi Gazalba, as quoted by Khadziq,²² stated that humans have advantages that other creatures do not have, namely the soul and with that soul humans have a culture. So, culture is something unique because only humans are able to create culture with their intellect. From this it can be concluded that culture is definitively the accumulation of knowledge that a person can use to survive and fulfill his life's needs as well as in terms of seeing physical and metaphysical realities.²³ Islam as a sacred teaching from Allah whose truth is absolute is not a culture because it is purely from Allah as the creator while culture is a human creation. However, after the teachings of Islam are chosen by humans and understood

¹⁷ G.F. Pijper, *Fragmenta Islamica: Beberapa Studi Mengenai Sejarah Islam di Indonesia Awal Abad XX* (Jakarta: UI Press, 1987), 25.

¹⁸ Tantowi, "Debates on Veiling from the 1920s to 1940s," 68.

¹⁹ Ibn Mandzūr, *Lisān al-'Arab* (Beirut: Dār Lisān al-'Arab, n.d.), 184.

²⁰ Tantowi, "The Quest of Indonesian Muslim Identity," 68.

²¹ Koentjaraningrat, *Pengantar Ilmu Antropologi* (Jakarta: PT. Rineka Cipta, 2009), 144-145.

²² Khadziq, *Islam*, 35.

²³ Musthafa Muslim, *Al-Thaqāfah al-Islāmīyah: Ta'rifuhā, Maṣādiruhā, Majalātuhā, Taḥaddīyātuhā* (Oman: Itsra, 2007), 18.

to make sense, that is where Islam interacts with the most basic culture and culture plays a very important role in one's diversity.²⁴

The majority of Madurese people are Muslim. The Madurese view of life cannot be separated from religious values. Islamic identity is very important for the Madurese.²⁵ In fact, the Madurese will feel angry and upset if they are declared not to be Muslim. This is due to a paradigm that people who are not Muslims are infidels who are in hell.²⁶ Islamization in Madura has been successful. In fact, Madurese often say that Madura is 100% Islamic, there is not a single Madurese population who is not Muslim. Even if there are those who are not Muslim, then they can be sure they are newcomers.²⁷ At the end of 2004, there was an article published on the compass stating that Madura was not only a city of students but Madura as an island of students and the foyer of Medina. The paper explains that Madura has approximately 2200 Islamic boarding schools and madrasas as well as 731 public schools. The level of understanding of Arabic letters reaches 60% and understanding of Latin letters is only 40%.²⁸

According to Hamka as quoted by Sulaiman,²⁹ the traditions instilled in Islam since the maritime era are not many that can be dismantled by modern traditions and western influences, although in other areas many have faded. One of the most important customs in several villages is to establish a family-owned *langgar* that functions as a place of worship next to the house even though the mosque is not too far from the house. He further stated that the island of Madura is the only island in Indonesia where religions do not mix. The island of Sumatra still has Christian areas, namely in Batak, the island of Sulawesi still has Christian areas, namely Minahasa and Toraja, the island of Kalimantan inland (Dayak) has converted to Christianity, but the island of Madura is still 100% Muslim.

²⁴ Mien Ahmad Rifai, *Manusia Madura* (Yogyakarta: Pilar Media, 2007), 53.

²⁵ A. Latief Wiyata, *Mencari Madura* (Jakarta: Bidik Phronesis Publishing, 2013), 3.

²⁶ A. Sulaiman Sadik, *Memahami Jati Diri, Budaya dan Kearifan Lokal Madura* (Jawa Timur: Balai Bahasa, 2014), 52.

²⁷ Ma'arif, *The History*, 142.

²⁸ Sadik, *Memahami Jati Diri*, 53.

²⁹ Ibid., 91-92.

The uniqueness of Madurese culture is mostly shaped and influenced by geographical which tends to be barren, so that their survival forms are mostly fishing and farming as their main livelihood. They are also formed by marine life that is full of challenges and risks, giving rise to characteristics of ethnicity, such as high mental and physical courage, hard-spirited and resilient, full of self-confidence, defensive in various dangerous and precarious situations, being open, straightforward in speaking, and upholding dignity and self-respect.³⁰

The Meaning of Dress in Religious Social Life

Functionally, we can use clothes to convey and reveal our identity to others. Passing on identity means showing others how we behave and how others should treat us. In addition, the way we dress certainly characterizes our physical appearance. Religious values, habits, environmental demands—written or unwritten—comfort values and image goals all influence the way we dress.³¹ In a study conducted by Fadwa El Guindi as quoted by Atik Catur, the *hijab* is a rich and meaningful phenomenon. The veil serves as a language that conveys social and cultural messages. For Christians, the headscarf becomes a fundamental symbol which has ideological meaning, especially for Catholics the veil is part of the view of womanhood and piety, and in the Islamic movement the veil has an important position as a symbol of identity. Furthermore, El Guindi analyzed the headscarf by placing the veil in the context of multidimensional dress—materially, space and religion—as a mode of communication built on intercultural, interreligious and inter-gender knowledge.³² In human life, the increasingly complex clothes still occupy an important part and need to be considered for each individual. Dress for the Madurese community has several functions including:

³⁰ Taufiqurrahman, “Identitas Budaya Madura,” *Karsa: Journal of Social and Islamic Culture*, Vol. 9, No. 1-11 (2007), 6.

³¹ Nazla Putri Utari and Nina Siti S. Siregar, “Pemaknaan Penggunaan Jilbab Syar’i di Kalangan Mahasiswa Psikologi,” *Simbolika*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (2015), 62-63.

³² Atik Catur Budiati, “Jilbab: Gaya Hidup Baru Kaum Hawa,” *Jurnal Sosiologi Islam*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (2011), 60.

Dress as a Social Ethics

The use of the hijab in Indonesia is largely due to the influence of tradition. One of the contributors to the development of tradition is the *pesantren*, which has had a significant influence in the widespread use of the hijab. The phenomenon of the hijab in Indonesia can also be seen as a lifestyle, trend and fashion³³ that is endemic. Apart from being a religious, cultural and lifestyle phenomenon, the hijab phenomenon can be seen from a socio-religious movement at the same time. The veil can appear as a force, movement, defense, resistance and protection. As a religious identity, the veil can be seen as a phenomenon of social movements regarding body politics in non-verbal communication. Dress also serves as a meaning that is quite effective in non-verbal communication during social interactions. Fashion is an inseparable part of one's daily appearance and style. Objects such as clothes and accessories that are worn are not just body coverings and decorations, they are also a means of communication to convey personal identity. In subsequent developments, fashion is not only about dress and accessories such as jewelry such as necklaces and bracelets, but other functional objects combined with sophisticated and unique design elements to become tools that can show and enhance one's appearance

Dress is an absolute necessity and it is impossible for someone to be without clothes, especially in the social world. Humans are creatures with the most perfect form. Dress glorifies and is able to distinguish humans from animals. That's what Astuti stated in a short interview. For him clothes are body armor because it would be impossible for him without clothes. From the results of interviews with several Madurese Muslim women, they considered dress as body protection because the body was considered a person's privacy area so it needed to be protected. Dress can keep women in the social world as expressed by Murtadha Mutahhari, as quoted by Nurul Khair, that one of the goals of covering one's

³³ Sinung Utami Hasri Habsari, "Fashion Hijab Dalam Kajian Budaya Populer," *Jurnal Penelitian dan Pengabdian Kepada Masyarakat UNSIQ*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (2015), 130.

genitals is to make it easier for humans to interact with the opposite sex.³⁴

Humans are social creatures who live in society. The Madurese community is classified as a cultured human who has the mind, creativity and work and has known dress since the time of their ancestors.³⁵ In social life, there are several social sanctions for violations of social ethics. Taking off clothes for the Madurese community is considered an impossible act because in addition to getting social sanctions, it will also be considered to have problems with mental health as can be found along the road, often without clothes, they will be considered crazy. So, dress for them is something that is very much needed both in personal activities when inside or outside the home when hanging out with the wider community. It is also dress which in turn glorifies them and distinguishes them from the animals.

The meaning of dress for Madurese Muslim women is a form of their participation in social interactions, namely, as a social ethic in social life. Dress apart from protecting the wearer's body also plays a role in one's obedience to social rules. For Madurese Muslim women, the researchers interviewed revealed that the social clothes that were comfortable and appropriate for them to wear were loose ones. Clothes that make up the body actually endanger humans, both men and women because they can invite lust which has implications for other immoral acts.

Dress as a Veil Cover

Dress for Madurese Muslim women in addition to serving as a social ethic also serves as a covering for the *aurat*. The majority of the Madurese people are Muslims and if there are non-Muslims then they are definitely immigrants.³⁶ That is about a statement that is enough to describe how Islam has become an integral part of life in the Madurese people. Islam is the most important part of their soul and breath, this is evident from the respect for the *kyai* which is much greater than their respect for the government. This is indicated by the expression "*bhuppa'-bbabbu'-ghuru-rato*" which is

³⁴ Nurul Khair, "Reinterpretation of Hijab Concept in The View of Murtadha Mutahhari," *Raushan Fikr: Jurnal Ilmiah Mahasiswa*, Vol. 8, No. 1 (2019), 104.

³⁵ Sadik, *Memahami Jati Diri*, 47.

³⁶ Ma'arif, *The History*, 142.

the philosophical foundation of the daily life of the Madurese. The meaning contained in this statement is that the Madurese must first be obedient and obedient to both parents, then to the teacher (*ulama/ kyai*), and finally to *rato* (formal or bureaucratic leader).³⁷

For Madurese ethnic entities, hierarchical compliance is a necessity to be actualized in daily praxis as binding “normative rules.” Therefore, ignorance or deliberate violations of these rules lead to social and cultural sanctions. It is in this scheme of submission that we find the position of the *kyai* which is very central in the socio-religious life of the Madurese community. Obedience to the figure of the teacher in this case is adherence to the *kyai* of the *pesantren*, or at least the *ustadh* in the *surau* as well as in the religious schools. For the Madurese, *kyai* is a guarantee of morality and *ukhrāwī* problems. From this it can be concluded that the Madurese’s obedience to the *kyai* was constructed based on their very strong life philosophy from an early age.³⁸

Huub de Jonge, in his *Madura in the Four Ages*, states that almost all people and boys in Madurese society wear skullcaps. What is also catching the eye is the large number of women who wear headscarves with light headgear or scarves.³⁹ Islam requires its adherents to dress according to these functions or the most important thing is to cover their genitals. Because showing nakedness can have a negative impact on the person concerned and for those who see it. From this also arises the discussion about the limits of the genitals that must be maintained by humans.⁴⁰ After conducting interviews with several Madurese Muslim women about the clothes they liked the most, the majority of them chose the robe as the most comfortable dress in all activities, especially formal activities outside the home. The robe that is liked also varies, but the criteria for the robe that are most in demand are loose, do not shape the body, are not transparent and are certainly made of comfortable materials such as cotton and other materials that are soft and able to absorb sweat well.

³⁷ Wiyata, *Mencari Madura*, 30.

³⁸ Ahmad Zainul Hamdi, “Klaim Religious Authority dalam Konflik Sunni-Syī‘i Sampang Madura,” *ISLAMICA: Jurnal Studi Keislaman*, Vol. 6, No. 2 (2014), 219.

³⁹ Jonge, *Madura dalam Empat Zaman*, 240.

⁴⁰ M. Quraish Shihab, *Jilbab Pakaian Wanita Muslimah*, VII (Tangerang Selatan: Lentera Hati, 2014), 52-53.

Islam regulates all forms of human life. Islam really maintains the dignity of both men and women. The media portrays women as creatures that are synonymous with beauty but in a negative realm.⁴¹ That is why Islam really looks after women by ordering them to cover their genitals to secure them in the social world in the wider community. The Islam which they chose as their religion instructs women and men to cover certain parts of their bodies which are different for each type. Madurese Muslim women, both *santri* and non-*santri*, choose to cover their genitals as an application of the Islamic faith they believe in. By closing one's genitals it means that one has carried out one of the commands in his religion.

Dress as Social Identity

Madurese Muslim women make clothes as a form of self-existence in society. Dress makes them more recognized and becomes their identity as Madurese Muslim women who understand the rules of religion and their environment. Besides functioning as a covering for genitalia, dress also functions as a form of self-recognition in the community. Indirectly, women's collective religious movements provide opportunities for women to construct new types of communities and their social identities. The women's religious movement is basically an affirmation of identity.⁴²

For Madurese Muslim women, besides functioning as a covering for their genitals, they also function as an affirmation of identity in a community group. Iswatul Hasanah in an interview states that she had certain clothes in every moment. When hanging out with friends, she will wear clothes that are more polite than the clothes she wore when she was alone. This is considered more appropriate and appropriate because that is the tradition and culture in his group even though in her daily activities, she does not use a veil as a head covering. Likewise, Dewi's experience, she

⁴¹ Uswatun Hasanah, "Perempuan dan Dakwah Kontemporer," *Jurnal Reflektika*, Vol. 12, No. 12 (2016), 34.

⁴² Rofhani, "Ekspresi dan Representasi Budaya Perempuan Muslim Kelas Menengah di Surabaya," *ISLAMICA: Jurnal Studi Keislaman*, Vol. 11, No. 2 (2017), 284.

will only use the veil for a long distance from her house, while for the house and its surroundings she takes off the veil.

The closed dress for Madurese Muslim women that the researchers met apparently agreed that this was the accepted social dress in their association. *Santri* or non-*santri* have the same social dress, namely loose and closed ones, although in their daily applications it varies from one to another. By wearing closed clothes, they will be easily recognized communally. It seems that the world of Madurese Muslim social associations is already familiar with closed clothes and agrees to dress them as formal attire.

Mukena: Between Tradition, Sacralization, and Self-Identity

Etymologically, the headscarf comes from the Arabic-root word *jalaba* (*jilbāb*), which means to bring or bring. *Jilbab* also means clothes (loose fitting brackets). The *jilbab* in particular, or *hijab* in general, is often identified with the clothes worn by women as an Islamic identity. The Indonesian people recognize the term “jilbab” as a head covering (veil) which is specifically worn by women. In *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia*, “jilbab” means a wide veil worn by Muslim women to cover the head and neck to the chest.⁴³ According to Louis Ma'luf, *hijab* is a dress or cloth that is spacious. As for M. Quraish Shihab,⁴⁴ a contemporary Indonesian *mufassir* defines the *hijab* as a loose *kurung* shirt with a head covering veil.⁴⁵ From this definition then *mukena* is formed based on orders in religion which dialogue with the culture of the community because of the influence of cultural issues.

According to Biyanto, cultural *da'wah* in the formulation of the Muhammadiyah is defined as an effort to instill Islamic values in all dimensions of life by paying attention to human potential and tendencies as cultural beings in a broad sense, in the context of

⁴³ Badan Pengembangan dan Pembinaan Bahasa Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan Republik Indonesia, “Jilbab,” *KBBI Daring*, available at <https://kbbi.kemdikbud.go.id/entri/jilbab>; accessed on July 20, 2021.

⁴⁴ M. Quraish Shihab, *Wawasan Al-Qur'an: Tafsir Madhu'i atas Pelbagai Persoalan Umat*, XI (Bandung: Mizan, 2000), 172.

⁴⁵ Fikria Najitama, “Jilbab dalam Konstruksi Pembacaan Kontemporer Muhammad Syahrur,” *Musawa: Jurnal Studi Gender dan Islam*, Vol. 13, No. 1 (2014), 10-11.

realizing the real of Islamic society.⁴⁶ Meanwhile, cultural preaching has characteristics such as dynamic, creative and innovative. This means that cultural *da'wah* requires preachers to try to understand ideas, customs, habits, values, norms, activity systems, symbols, and physical things that have certain meanings and live fertile lives in people's lives.⁴⁷

Mukena as a Tradition

Mukena is a prayer dress used by Nusantara Muslimah covering Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore.⁴⁸ Madurese Muslim women who are part of the population of the archipelago also recognize and use *mukena* as their prayer clothes. The presence of *mukena* as prayer dress is closely related to the role of Walisongo's *da'wah*, which at that time preached in the land of Java by not eliminating customs and traditions that were deeply rooted in society.

Mukena is a term used to refer to women's prayer clothes, especially in Indonesia and Malaysia, while specifically for the Madura region which is part of the archipelago, the term *rokob* is known. *Mukena* was first used in Indonesia in connection with the *da'wah* role of Walisongo when spreading Islam in a unique way by not eliminating the ingrained traditions in society.⁴⁹ At that time, Indonesian women's dress was a kind of cloth wrapped around the body and only covered up the chest.⁵⁰ This then contradicts the legal requirements for women's dress to offer prayers. Walisongo wisely explained that the dress they wore on a daily basis were not fit to be worn before God. So, *mukenas* were made and introduced as prayer clothes for women.⁵¹ The dress used by Madurese Muslim women before the arrival of Islam was a kind of *jarit* cloth wrapped around the chest or known as *kemben*.⁵² The reason behind the use of open dress in Madura at that time was the hot weather, so people tended to wear clothes that were easily exposed to the wind. From this, Walisongo compromises

⁴⁶ Biyanto, "Muhammadiyah dan Problema Hubungan Agama-Budaya," *ISLAMICA: Jurnal Studi Keislaman*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (2014), 93.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Tantowi, "The Quest of Indonesian Muslim Identity," 69.

⁴⁹ Mirantika and Marbun, "Pengaruh Modernisasi," 121.

⁵⁰ Tantowi, "The Quest of Indonesian Muslim Identity," 68.

⁵¹ Mirantika and Marbun, "Pengaruh Modernisasi," 121.

⁵² Thomas Stamford Raffles, *The History of Java*, III (Jakarta: Narasi, 2014), 54.

with the community, especially women, that there are special clothes that are suitable for performing prayers.

Mukena has been known and used in Madura as prayer clothes since Islam first entered and developed in Madura. Islam entered Madura in the early 16th century. Meanwhile, Walisongo as a propagator of Islam in Java had preached from 1440 AD to the mid-16th century. From this it can be seen that mukena first entered and was known as prayer clothes in Madura during Walisongo era. De Jonge in his research entitled *Madura in the Four Ages* tells that Madurese men pray at home or in one of the public prayer rooms. Women always pray at home using *mukena*, a white garment that covers the whole body.⁵³ In terms of shape, *mukena* is divided into two, namely cut and continuous *mukena*. *Mukena* is generally white in color and equipped with a few embroidered flowers which are characteristic of Nusantara culture. *Mukena* when used by Muslim women, it will only show the face and palms which are indeed shaped and designed according to the rules of their religion.

Ernest Cassirer in *An Essay on Man*, as stated by Jujun S. Suriasumantri, states that the uniqueness of man actually lies not in his ability to think, but because of his ability to speak. Humans as animal symbolicum have a broader meaning than Homo sapiens (thinking creatures). This is because in their thinking activities humans have used symbols.⁵⁴ With the ability to use human language, we can develop culture and pass on cultural values from generation to generation.

Madurese Muslim women interpret *mukena* as a tradition and legacy of their ancestors that are still relevant today. *Mukena*, as a tradition that is still maintained by Madurese Muslim women, is considered a comfortable spiritual dress to wear because it has been introduced since the first time she learned to pray. The *mukena* tradition that continues to exist is sufficient to explain to us that Islam has a flexible and relevant concept that knows no boundaries of time and place. Islam is a religion that is firm in matters of faith which is principle and mandatory, but it is not a rigid religion. This can be seen from the form of Islam which is

⁵³ Jonge, *Madura dalam Empat Zaman*, 240.

⁵⁴ Jujun S. Suriasumantri, *Filsafat Ilmu: Sebuah Pengantar Populer* (Jakarta: Pustaka Sinar Harapan, 1996), 171.

able to co-exist with local traditions and cultures without clashing - in this case, the tradition of *ber-mukena*. Islam gives freedom of thought to its people in terms of the media as the fulfillment of these obligations with a variety of prayer clothes that exist in every corner of the world.

Mukena as a Form of Self-Sacralization

Dress is a silent language that communicates through the use of verbal and non-verbal symbols. Understanding the meaning of the symbols conveyed by clothes is very important, so that someone is able to show who he is so that the desired impression can be obtained. The clothes we wear make a statement about ourselves even if we are not the type to care too much about clothes. People who interact with us will still interpret that we are wanting to show a certain message from the clothes we wear.⁵⁵ Likewise in the use of *mukena* there is a message that the wearer wants to convey that he is in a certain state, namely a spiritual and sacred state.

The Madurese Muslim women whom the researchers interviewed preferred to specialize in their spiritual dress. This is because of the understanding that is constructed in them that facing God is special so it is necessary to distinguish between social dress when on the move with creatures and when carrying out worship activities in front of the creator. Facing God in the sense of worship is an urgent part of human life as a servant so that the specialization of clothes needs to be done for the sake of deep respect and worship.

For Madurese Muslim women, someone who uses *mukena* in prayer means communicating to himself and others that he is in a spiritual state and becomes a means for himself. *Mukena* is a dress used by women specifically in prayer and in other spiritual activities such as teaching children the Koran. They consider the moment when they face their Lord as a special moment, so it is necessary for them to choose special clothes that are only used in these moments. For them there must be a difference when

⁵⁵ Mastura Fakhruunnisa, "Gaya Busana sebagai Media Pembentukan Identitas Musik White Shoes and the Couples Company," *Acta Diurna Komunikasi*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (2016), 1-2.

interacting with fellow humans and when interacting with God as the creator.

Mukena as a Female Identity

Using *mukena* apart from being a complement and a condition for covering one's genitals in prayer for Madurese Muslim women also has its own meaning beyond that. *Mukena*, which looks like a special head covering for women, turns out to be able to emphasize women's identity. When Madurese Muslim women use the *mukena* when they are going to pray, it is as if communicating to the public about the differences and specialties of dress for men and women. *Mukena* is only used by women and cannot be used by men because Madurese men use *sarong* and cap as described by de Jonge in his book entitled *Madura in the Four Ages*, which states that almost all men and boys wear skullcap while women are veiled.⁵⁶

In the structure of the brain, men and women, there are differences in many ways. This results in differences in the ways and styles of the two types of humans. All of this has been arranged by Allah, so that men and women can live side by side and support each other to achieve common goals.⁵⁷ Madurese Muslim women are well aware of the difference between men and women as servants of Allah who are obliged to worship and socialize. Men and women have different paths of worship and rewards and they do not compete on the same path nor do they fulfill the attributes of the worship. The meaning of *mukena* for Madurese Muslim women whom the researchers met and succeeded in expressing its meaning for the use of *mukena* is based on the awareness of seeing *mukena* as a barrier, differentiator and confirmation of women's identity. The clothes for men and women are clearly different and the existence of the *mukena* as prayer clothes for Muslim women is able to properly explain and emphasize these differences as well as the function of dress as a message conveyor for its users.

The use of *mukena* by Muslim women does not necessarily make a problem with the concept of gender which is widely echoed by some people both in the academic and political world.

⁵⁶ Jonge, *Madura dalam Empat Zaman*, 240.

⁵⁷ Shihab, *Jilbab Pakaian Wanita Muslimah*, 59.

This becomes a strong and clear affirmation. *Mukena* with its shape is clearly not in demand by men. This is evidenced by the absence of Muslim men either in Madura or anywhere else in the archipelago who were interested in praying during their prayers at the time this research report was written. This is then able to explain critically and comprehensively that in reality the concept that exists between men and women is different before God both in the spiritual realm and in the social sphere even though in general they are human beings and servants of Allah who have rights and obligation.

Conclusion

Dress for Madurese is a form of social ethics as well as a cover of aurat and also a social identity in society. Covering the *aurat* for Madurese Muslim women is a form of understanding and expression of religious orders in terms of dress. Dress is also used as a social identity in society. Daily dresss that appear in social life are a reflection of what is not easily visible. Dress makes a Madurese Muslim woman more comfortable in doing activities and is more communally recognized.

Madurese muslim women perceive *mukena* as a cultural tradition, as a distinguished self-sacralization as well as emphasizing women's identity. *Mukena* is a prayer dress because it has become a habit and culture so that it is difficult for Madurese Muslim women to leave it. *Mukena* is a special garment that is only used in prayer or in spiritual activities to convey the meaning that it is in a spiritual state as well as to distinguish social dress from spiritual clothes. *Mukena* also serves as a confirmation of women's identity.

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