**Panel Proposal**

**Localizing strangers:**

**Arab Identity in contemporary Southeast Asia**

This panel intends to discuss the intricate reconfiguration of identity articulation within the Hadhrami-Arab communities and their relations with the host population in Southeast Asia. Known as the Indian Ocean diaspora from homeland Hadhramawt, the present day of Yemen, this panel departs from the premise: the salience of the Arab identity, which has been juxtaposed with Islam, in recent Southeast Asian Muslims. The topics are centered on religion, language, and ethnicity within the localized socio-political contexts after the new structure of the nation-states. This focuses on understanding how the different trajectories of locality influence and shape the different outcomes and patterns of Arabs’ relations with the wider local populations in the region

The panel inquires contributors to critically analyze the impact of the local setting on the societal identity, as well as the manifestation of Arab cultural elements in Southeast Asia. The panelists are directed to evaluate the potential outcomes of the interplay between the local setting and Arab identity, namely in terms of generating a novel cultural or identity construct (localizing) or engaging in a process of contestation that reinforces a particular identity (contesting). The observers could interpret the consequences of this interaction from multiple vantage points, encompassing 1) Collective identity; 2) Arabic manuscripts; 3) Utilization of Arabic daily language; 4) Another related cultural products; and 5) Gender Perspective on identity change. In order to increase the diversity of viewpoints, particularly with regard to gender, we also strongly encourage female scholars to participate in this panel.

The initial study will examine the impact of local languages and interactions with transnational activities, particularly contacts with Middle Eastern nations, on the linguistic changes observed in Arabic among Arab ancestry communities in Jakarta and Surakarta. The second study examines the interplay of transnationalism, democracy, and kinship in fostering the resurgence of the traditional identity of the Ba-'Alawi tribe in Indonesia. The third study will examine the interplay between the state building process and Ba-'Alawi identity in Singapore. And the fourth paper will examine the process of localized expression of Islam through textual interpretation in West Java, Indonesia.

**Co-Covenor:**

Geradi Yudhistira (Universiteit of Amsterdam)

[g.yudhistira@uva.nl](mailto:g.yudhistira@uva.nl)

Martin Slama (Austrian Academy of Science)

martin.slama@oeaw.ac.at

**Discussant:**

Martin Slama (Austrian Academy of Science)

martin.slama@oeaw.ac.at

**Shaping communities through language practices, ideologies, and mobility: the case of the Arab-descent communities in Surakarta and Jakarta**

**Luigi Sausa**

Ph.D. Student at the Department of Asian, African and Mediterranean studies

University of Naples “L’Orientale”

lsausa@unior.it / luigi.sausa@gmail.com

Speakers of diaspora languages are often categorized into those who learn the diaspora language in their households (L1 speakers) and those who, despite not using it at home, have a strong cultural connection with their diaspora language and frequently re-learn it as L2. What happens in terms of language use and variation when a diaspora language is not used as L1, still represents the in-group language, and holds a high-valued position among the wider national context? This contribution aims to address this question by providing a preliminary description of **verbal interactions** within Arab-descent communities in two districts of Surakarta and Jakarta, Indonesia. Different Indonesian communities of Arab origins imagine and create their belonging to a unified social group through shared linguistic practices. The contribution aims to highlight how the intersection between localized **linguistic practices**, **ideologies** related to the **Arabic language** and **trajectories** of transregional, transnational, and local **mobility**, shape what in this first analysis I describe as a **lexical variety** of vernacular Indonesian. The research is grounded on **40 hours** of conversations recorded in the field, partially transcribed, and analyzed through the software ELAN, already existing lexicographic material, and interviews.

**Keywords**: *Linguistic Anthropology, Arabic Language in Diaspora, Vernacular Indonesian, Hadramitic Diaspora, Language Ideologies, Mobility.*

**The Reawakening of Identity:**

**Kinship, Democracy, and Trans-Ocean Network within Ba-‘Alawi Group**

**Geradi Yudhistira**

Ph.D. Researcher at the Amsterdam Institute of Social Science Research

Universiteit van Amsterdam

g.yudhistira@uva.nl

After the re-establishment of a trans-oceanic network connecting Southeast Asia and Yemen in the late 20th century, there has been a notable re-awakening of the traditional identity of the Hadhrami’s Ba-‘Alawi community in Indonesia. Several studies reveal that the re-establishment of the trans-oceanic network played a major contribution in the transformation of the Ba-'Alawi's identity in Indonesia during the decade following the 1990s. However, this study argues the contribution of trans-national and domestic clannish networks and kinship connections in the dissemination of traditional 'Alawiya values, which have the potential to foster group feelings within young Ba-‘Alawi. Based on fieldwork conducted between January and December 2022, I observed that kinship networks and familial relations played a pivotal role in the transmission of traditional values among the younger Ba-'Alawi, as evidenced by some instances observed in the regions of Depok, Solo, and Yogyakarta.

**Keywords:** *Traditional Identity, Ba-‘Alawi Diaspora, Da’wah in Indonesia, Kinship Networks, Group Feeling*

**The socio-economic origin of the “Malayization” of the Arabs:**

**The case of Hadhrami diaspora in Singapore, ca. 1965-1998**

**Rangga E. Saputra**

PhD Student at the Universität Hamburg

s.e.rangga.esaputra@gmail.com

This study deals with the social history of the Hadhrami-Arab diaspora after the independence of Singapore. It aims to understand how Hadhramis adapted and transformed to new sociopolitical conditions during nation-state building projects. By scrutinizing case studies in Malay business associations and religious charities, this study argues that the integration processes of the Arabs into Malays (Malayization) have roots in mutual interests between both communities under harsh economic policies and competition among ethnic groups. The pursuit of securing businesses and assets pushed Hadhramis to strengthen self-identification with the Malay, while the Malays relied on Hadhramis, with a reputation as philanthropists and transregional merchants, to improve their economic performance. Furthermore, the Malayization of the Arabs, grounded in everyday interactions within socio-economic activities, demonstrates their relationship as situationally dynamic and asymmetrical. This shows an “ambiguous” identity articulation of the Arabs, whose economic interests strengthened their cultural traits with the locals, but also preserved their ethnic identity. Hence, this study challenges the previous binary concepts between ‘indigenization’ and ‘identity maintenance’ in a broader discourse on Hadhrami identity in Southeast Asia.

**Keywords**: *Hadhrami, Malayization, socio-economy, nation-state building, Singapore.*

***Nadoman* and Its Cultural Agent: Strengthening Sundanese Islamic Identity in Twentieth-Century Indonesia**

**Muhammad Nida’ Fadlan**

PhD Researcher at the Universität zu Köln, Germany

nidafadlan@gmail.com

The *nadoman*, an Islamic poetic form originating from the Sundanese community within Islamic educational institutions (*pesantren*) in West Java, Indonesia, has similarities to *syair* in Malay and *singir* in Javanese, and represents a localised expression of Islam through textual interpretation. Despite its cultural significance, the *nadoman* has received little scholarly attention. This paper focuses on the *nadoman* of Kiai Hasan Mughni, an overlooked twentieth-century Islamic scholar from Kuningan, West Java. In an effort to preserve the Sundanese Islamic writing tradition amidst the dominance of the Javanese language in the *pesantren* of Java Island,and to affirm the collective identity of the Islamic Sundanese, Mughni produced several *nadoman* books in his own handwriting. These works serve to enhance the understanding of fundamental Islamic concepts and to guide individuals in the application of Islamic knowledge in their daily lives. In summary, this study explores the significant role of Kiai Hasan Mughni as a cultural agent and examines the cultural legacy he produced.

**Keywords:** *Nadoman, Sundanese Islamic Poetry, Kiai Hasan Mughni, Cultural Preservation, Islamic Vernacularisation.*