Analysis of the Arabic Orthography of the Archipelago in Madura: Text, Characteristics and Meaning

Wiranto Talibo [1], Anggun Inunu [2], Anggie Potale [3], Suharia Sarif [4], Damhuri[5]

[1,2,3,5] IAIN Sultan Amai Gorontalo, Indonesia
Email Author: fajartalibo511@gmail.com[1], angguninunu45@gmail.com[2] potaleanggie26@gmail.com[3]
suhariasarif@iaingorontalo.ac.id[4] damhuri@iaingorontalo.ac.id[5]

Abstract: This study aims to describe and analyze the orthographic system of Madurese Arabic Pegon, as reflected in three primary manuscripts used in pesantren traditions: Safinatun Najah, Bulughul Maram, and a handwritten translation of section 677. A qualitative approach was employed using descriptive-analytical and philological methods. Data were collected through manuscript observation, transliteration, and document analysis, and examined using philological, orthographic, and semiotic frameworks. The findings indicate that Madurese Pegon displays an adaptive graphemic structure characterized by modified letters such as پ, غ٘, ڽ, and چ that represent local phonemes. Its vocalization system is flexible and relies on readers' competence within pesantren learning practices. The analysis further shows that Pegon functions as a pedagogical and hermeneutic tool, bridging classical Arabic texts with local language and culture. This study addresses a gap in research on Pegon orthography in Madura. It affirms its role in shaping linguistic and religious identity. The results underscore the urgency of preserving Pegon and the potential to expand interdisciplinary studies of Nusantara Islamic writing traditions.

Keywords: Arabic Pegon, Madurese, Orthography, Philology, Pesantren

Abstrak: Penelitian ini bertujuan mendeskripsikan dan menganalisis sistem ortografi Arab Pegon Madura melalui tiga naskah primer yang digunakan dalam tradisi pesantren, yaitu Safinatun Najah, Bulughul Maram, dan salinan terjemahan pasal 677. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode deskriptif-analitis dan filologis. Data dikumpulkan melalui observasi naskah, transliterasi, dan studi dokumentasi, kemudian dianalisis menggunakan kajian filologis, ortografis, dan semiotik. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Arab Pegon Madura memiliki struktur grafemis yang adaptif, ditandai oleh modifikasi huruf seperti غ٘, پ, ڽ, dan چ yang mewakili fonem lokal. Sistem vokalisasinya bersifat fleksibel dan bergantung pada kompetensi pembaca dalam tradisi pesantren. Hasil analisis juga memperlihatkan bahwa Pegon Madura berfungsi sebagai perangkat pedagogis dan hermeneutik untuk menjembatani teks Arab klasik dengan bahasa dan budaya lokal. Penelitian ini mengisi kekosongan kajian ortografi Pegon di Madura sekaligus menegaskan relevansinya dalam pembentukan identitas linguistik dan religius masyarakat. Temuan ini membuka peluang untuk pelestarian literasi Pegon serta pengembangan studi interdisipliner mengenai tulisan Islam Nusantara.

INTRODUCTION

Arabic Pegon is an orthographic system derived from Arabic script, employed in the transcription of indigenous languages in Indonesia, including Javanese, Sundanese, and Madura. This script evolved as a conduit for the dissemination of Islam across the archipelago, serving as an educational instrument through the yellow book utilized in Islamic boarding schools.[1] The literacy tradition in coastal regions demonstrates that Pegon plays a vital role in the dissemination of religious texts and oral traditions, thereby becoming an essential component of the Islamic cultural heritage of the archipelago.[2]

In Madura, Pegon is extensively employed within religious and pedagogical texts. The works of Safinatun Najah and Bulughul Maram are studied through explanations rendered in Madurese, written using the Pegon script, to enhance students' comprehension of Arabic. This integration aids in the internalization of Islamic teachings, particularly for students who are more accustomed to their native language.[3], [4] Through this process, Pegon serves as an intermediary that links classical Arabic and Madurese, thereby facilitating a better understanding of religious sciences.

Linguistically and culturally, Pegon transcends mere communication; it embodies the Islamic identity of the Madurese people. The cultural values transmitted through pesantren traditions also shape the religious character of the local community. Furthermore, the study of Pegon contributes to the preservation of Islamic knowledge amid ongoing social transformations, thus reinforcing Pegon's role as a symbol of a dynamic cultural identity.[5], [6], [7] The semiotic approach elucidates that Pegon encompasses signs and symbols that articulate spiritual values, as well as the relationship between the language of revelation and the local culture. Comprehending the symbolic dimension is essential, as each graphic element of Pegon can convey a particular cultural message.[8], [9], [10]

Nevertheless, research concerning the orthographic structure and graphemic variation of Pegon Madura remains limited. Variations of characters such as پ, غ, ۑ, and چ represent phonological adaptations of the sounds of the Madurese language; however, they have not been thoroughly documented. This deficiency results in an inadequate understanding of the relationship between phonological systems and Pegon graphemic systems.[11] An adaptive phonology approach is necessary to elucidate how the Madurese people adapt local sounds to the Arabic writing system in order to develop new orthographies that are creative and innovative.

In addition to the phonological aspect, research on social and cultural meanings in Madura Pegon texts remains limited. The Pegon texts used in pesantren embody religious values that interact with the social norms of the Madurese community; however, this dimension has not been sufficiently examined.[12] A sociolinguistic approach is essential for understanding how Pegon contributes to the development of language identity among the Madurese people. Research indicates that both Arabic and indigenous languages play significant roles in social interactions, thereby, the utilization of Pegon strengthens the religious and social identity of local communities.[13]

Research on cross-cultural interactions between Arabic and Madurese has been limited. The intricate nature of cultural relations is frequently overlooked in linguistic studies, resulting in a lesser focus on Pegon within the context of language and cultural studies. In fact, adopting an interdisciplinary approach can uncover patterns of cultural interaction that significantly influence the development of the Pegon writing system.[14], [15]

The existing body of literature indicates that research on Pegon primarily concentrates on the Javanese and Sundanese variants. Meanwhile, Madura Pegon remains relatively unexplored, despite possessing distinct graphical and historical features. This deficiency

highlights a research gap concerning the operation of Madura Pegon within the context of pesantren literacy and the social dynamics of the community.[16], [17] Additionally, the visual documentation and orthographic analysis of the Safinatun Najah and Bulughul Maram manuscripts remain limited; therefore, the historical and cultural significance of these manuscripts has not been thoroughly examined.[18], [19]

The philological approach holds significant importance in the analysis of the Pegon manuscript, as it enables researchers to discern the social context and linguistic features embedded within the text. Philological studies have been employed to comprehend classical religious texts, thereby making them pertinent for integration into the study of the orthography of Pegon Madura.[20] Through the application of philological techniques, the distinctive characteristics of Pegon within the Madura manuscript can be systematically identified.

The investigation into Islamic literacy within the archipelago substantiates that Pegon constitutes a significant instrument in the dissemination of religious knowledge. Within the tradition of Pegon Islamic boarding schools, it functions as a conduit of knowledge between Arabic texts and speakers of indigenous languages, thereby becoming the primary foundation for the advancement of Islamic education.[21] The perspective on pesantren education indicates that Pegon-based pedagogical approaches influence students' capacity to interpret classical texts within their contextual frameworks. Research demonstrates that employing Pegon in learning strategies enhances students' linguistic and religious competencies.[22]

This research aims to address the existing gap through an orthographic analysis of Pegon Madura, encompassing the structure of letters, the adaptation of grapheme-phoneme correspondences, and the semiotic meanings embedded within the text. The study also investigates the relationship between writing forms and the socio-cultural context of the Madurese people, employing descriptive, semiotic, and philological linguistic approaches. The objective is to provide a comprehensive understanding of Pegon's role as a means of expressing religious identity and representing the local culture of the Madurese community.[23], [24], [25]

Theoretically, this research enhances the academic understanding of Islam Nusantara by demonstrating that Madura Pegon represents a distinctive form of phonological and cultural adaptation. Pegon not only embodies the transliteration of Arabic but also reflects the linguistic consciousness of the community in adapting local phonemes to the Arabic script.[26], [27] Practically, this research establishes the foundation for the preservation of pesantren literacy and the revitalization of Pegon amidst the prevailing dominance of Latin script. Prior studies affirm that the existence of Pegon is essential to be maintained, as it constitutes an integral part of the cultural identity of the archipelago.[28], [29], [30]

The objective of this research is to elucidate the orthographic system of Pegon Madura, analyze its linguistic and phonetic features, and interpret the socio-cultural significance embodied in the Pegon manuscript. The study of Safinatun Najah and Bulughul Maram aims to make a substantial contribution to the preservation of indigenous Islamic literary traditions and to the advancement of a curriculum founded upon Madurese cultural knowledge.[31]

METHODS

This research employs a qualitative methodology, incorporating descriptive, analytical, and philological techniques. This approach was selected due to the study's focus on the description of the Arabic orthographic system of Pegon Madura, as well as the analysis of the linguistic and cultural significances embedded within the manuscript. The analytical descriptive method is utilized to identify graphemic patterns, writing structures, and orthographic characters present in Pegon texts. The philological approach contributes to verifying the manuscript's authenticity, ensuring data validity, and understanding the historical context behind the emergence of texts within the tradition of Madura Islamic boarding schools. These

methodologies mutually complement each other to facilitate a comprehensive understanding of the orthographic features of Pegon Madura.

The primary data for this research comprises three Arabic manuscripts of Pegon Madura. These include the "Book of Safinatun Najah" by Sheikh Salim bin Sheikh Samir Hadhri, the "Book of Bulughul Maram" by Al-Hafidz Ibn Hajar Al-Asqalani, and a manuscript of the translation of Pegon Madura concerning article 677 of "Bulughul Maram." These manuscripts were procured from the personal collections of educators at Madura Islamic boarding schools and are utilized as educational materials in yellow book format. Additionally, secondary data were obtained through relevant literary sources, such as books, journal articles, and previous scholarly works concerning Arabic orthography in Pegon, Madurese linguistics, and the socio-cultural context of Islam within the archipelago.

Data collection techniques are conducted through direct observation and document analysis. Observation involved examining the writing style, sentence structure, and vocalization system in the Pegon manuscript. The study of the documents includes assessing the physical condition of the manuscript, the process of transliteration from Pegon to Latin script, and recording the variations in graphemes that occur. This methodology enables researchers to acquire comprehensive information regarding the orthographic structure of Pegon Madura.

The data were analyzed through three stages. The first stage involved philological analysis to trace the variants of the reading, assess the condition of the codex, and evaluate the level of authenticity of the manuscript. The second stage entailed orthographic analysis to identify modified letters, typical graphemic shapes, and phoneme representation systems employed in Pegon texts. The third stage consisted of linguistic semiotic analysis to interpret the social, religious, and cultural significances implied within the text, particularly concerning Islamic boarding school learning and the identity of the Madurese people. This analytical process enabled the research to attain a comprehensive understanding of the structure and orthographic functions of the Madura Pegon within the context of local Islamic culture and education.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
1. General Description of the Manuscript

An analysis of the three primary manuscripts Safinatun Najah, Bulughul Maram, and a copy of Pegon Madura article 677- indicates that the utilization of the Pegon Arabic script represents an educational practice deeply embedded within the scientific tradition of Madura Islamic boarding schools. These manuscripts serve not only as mediums for transmitting religious texts but also as reflections of the internalization process of Islamic epistemology within the context of the local language. Therefore, Pegon is not merely a tool for reading texts but functions as a literacy mechanism enabling students to comprehend religious teachings through their most familiar language.

The composition that merges Arabic script with Madura Pegon exemplifies a dual-layered literacy mechanism. The primary layer comprises Arabic texts utilized as educational sources. The secondary layer involves Pegon annotations serving to interpret, extract meaning, and adapt content to the socio-cultural milieu. This pattern suggests that Pegon fulfills dual roles: as an orthographic system and as a local hermeneutic tool. Furthermore, the convention of slanted writing within Pegon between lines of Arabic script demonstrates a deliberate pedagogical intervention designed to enhance students' comprehension of complex Arabic syntax structures.

2. Manuscript Visual Data

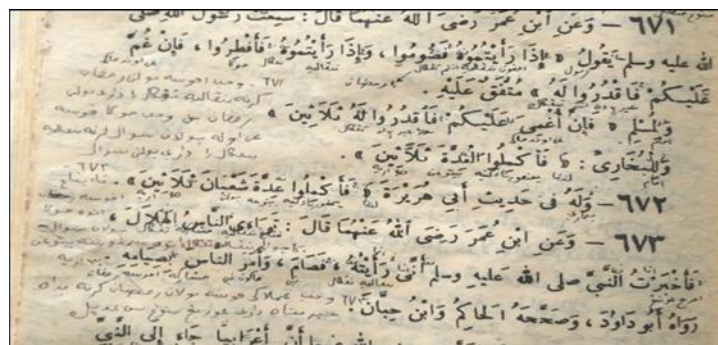**Figure 1.** Fragments of Arabic Writing in the Book of Safinatun Najah

(Author: Sheikh Salim bin Sheikh Samir Hadhri; Source: Mas'udi Eko Diansyah, S.Pd.I, 2015)

This image illustrates the direct integration between the Arabic script and the Madura Pegon. The practice of inserting translations between lines exemplifies a learning model based on interlinear glossing, a technique involving explanations on a word-by-word basis that facilitates students in developing grammatical understanding incrementally.[32], [33], [34]

Examples of transliterations:
Kaangghuy adua' paneka mendem mayyit paling sakone'na.
(To pray while burying the body, at least.)

The utilization of Arabic vocabulary, such as 'adua'' and 'mayyit', in conjunction with Madurese elements, signifies the occurrence of a lexical hybridization process. This illustrates that Pegon not only translates texts but also constructs new semantic categories that cater to the communicative requirements of the Madurese community.

Figure 2. Fragments of Arabic Writing in the Book of Bulughul Maram

(Essay: Al-Hafidz Ibn Hajar Al-Asqalani; Source: Mas'udi Eko Diansyah, S.Pd.I, 2015)

This image depicts the Pegon edge notes functioning as scholarly marginalia, namely, annotations that offer supplementary context, legal elucidations, or social interpretations. The existence of marginalia indicates that students not only engage in reading but also interact with the text, and occasionally provide critique.

Transliteration:
Napa maksodna ayat niki, lamun oreng ngelampahi amal sonnat, kaangguy nambah pahala.

(This verse elucidates that if an individual performs Sunnah deeds, then he contributes additional merit reward.)

The note exhibits a pragmatic approach in the instruction of the yellow book, facilitating students' ability to convert abstract doctrines into practical applications. From a sociolinguistic perspective, this pattern also demonstrates a form of cultural resistance to the dominance of the standard Arabic language, as Pegon continues to emphasize locally rooted, experience-based meanings.[35], [36], [37]
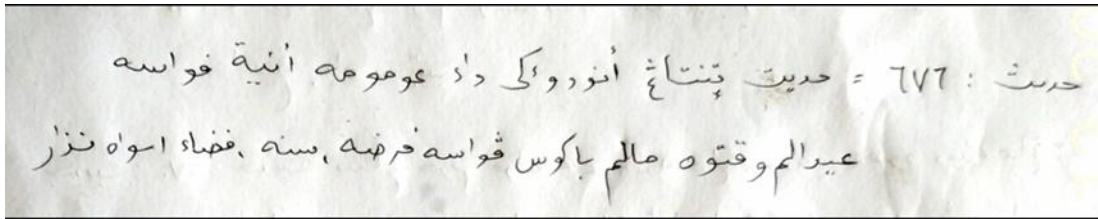
Figure 3. Handwritten Copy of Translation of Pegon Madura from Bulughul Maram Article 677

(Source: Mas'udi Eko Diansyah, S.Pd.I, 2015)

The handwriting depicted in the third image exhibits spontaneous, non-typographic, and personalized characters. This observation indicates that Pegon persists in the tradition of manual writing within Islamic boarding schools, despite the advancements in print and digital media.

Table 1. Transliteration and Translation

Pegon Text	Latin Transliteration	Indonesian Translation
انوذووا‌ڤي دا اوmomّا انيّت ڤاسا ايدالم بكتو مالم باكوس ڤاسا فرضو سوننت اتوب نذر	Anodhuwaghi da' omomma aniat pasa e dalem bakto malem, bagus pasa fardhu, sonnat, otaba nadzar.	This Hadith pertains to the general guidelines concerning the intention of fasting at night, including mandatory fasts, Sunnah fasts, and Nadzar.

This text demonstrates that Pegon is not merely a linguistic medium but also a conduit for internalizing religious norms. A concise and pragmatic sentence structure is a crucial feature that pesantren pedagogy emphasizes for practical language functionality.

3. Orthography Analysis of Madura Pegon Manuscripts

The analysis indicates that the orthographic system of Pegon Madura exhibits an adaptive-phonological nature. This system does not merely replicate Arabic scripts passively; instead, it innovates graphemes to accommodate the phonological requirements of the Madurese language. Such adaptation demonstrates the metalinguistic competence of the Madurese community in comprehending the relationship between sound and grapheme, as well as their capacity to develop an autonomous orthography.

Table 2. Orthography Analysis of Madura Pegon Letters

No	Pegon Orthographic Elements	Pegon Arabic Letter Representation	Fonem Madura	Example	Description
1	ݝ (nga)	ݝ	/ŋ/	Kaangghuy	This sound is absent in Arabic; therefore, modifications are necessary.
2	ڤ (ap)	ڤ	/p/	Paneka, pasa	Grapheme innovation intended to replace the void of the phoneme /p/ in Arabic.
3	ڽ (nya)	ڽ	/ɲ/	Katanya, nyare	Represents the characteristic palatal phoneme of the Madurese language.
4	چ (ac)	چ	/c/	Cacak, acah	Demonstrates adaptation to the Afrikat sound that is absent in Arabic.
5	غ (ghain)	غ	/ɣ/	Ghurur, ghibah	Arabic phonemes are maintained in accordance with the requirements of classical texts.

This orthographic analysis verifies that Madura Pegon should not be regarded solely as a derivative script. It is a writing system that has experienced a significant process of structural localization and possesses its own internal conventions.

4. Vocalization and Phonological Systems

The vocalization system of Pegon Madura demonstrates a propensity to omit harakat. The omission of harakat does not indicate incompleteness; rather, it represents a literacy strategy ingrained within the tradition of Islamic boarding schools. Readers depend on phonological patterns acquired through consistent reading practices.[38], [39], [40] This phenomenon indicates that the Pegon system functions within the framework of the oral-written continuum, which constitutes the domain wherein oral readings influence the representation of written language.

Table 3. The Typical Vowel and Consonant System of Pegon Madura.

No	Element	Representation	Fonem Madura	Arabic origin	Function
1	ݝ (nga)	ݝ	/ŋ/	ك	Creatively absorbed local sounds.
2	چ (ac)	چ	/c/	ج	Symbolizes sounds that do not exist in Arabic.

3	پ (ap)	پ	/p/	ف	Represents phonemes that are not available in the Arabic system.
4	ث (nya)	ث	/ɲ/	ي	Marking the sound of palatal sneezing.
5	Vokalisasi fleksibel	Alif, Waw, Ya	/a/, /i/, /u/	–	Harakat is omitted because the context determines the pronunciation.

This vocalization phenomenon demonstrates that Pegon functions as a writing system heavily dependent on the proficiency of its user community. This distinguishes it from standard Arabic orthography, which relies heavily on diacritics. Consequently, Pegon can be classified as a system that effectively balances graphical efficiency with phonological accuracy.

DISCUSSION

The results of this study significantly contribute to bridging the gap in scientific research on Pegon Madura, which has historically been understudied in Islamic orthography across the archipelago. Previous research has primarily focused on Pegon as used in Java and Sundanese regions, with limited discussion on its structural or functional aspects in Madura. The findings demonstrate that Pegon Madura possesses a well-established orthographic system, characterized by graphemic innovations such as غ, پ, ث, and چ, which indicate a consistent mechanism of phonological adaptation within the speaking community.[16] The findings enhance understanding of adaptive orthography, as expounded by Coulmas, who asserts that writing systems evolve in accordance with the phonological requirements of the user community.

From a philological perspective, this research addresses the gap in understanding how Pegon functions within the learning traditions of Islamic boarding schools. The presence of interline glosses and edge annotations in the analyzed manuscripts demonstrates the practice of interlinear glossing, a method historically associated with the study of the Yellow Book, as noted by Behrend in studies of archipelago manuscripts. Moreover, this research offers a novel contribution by demonstrating that this practice functions not only as an aid to reading but also as a hermeneutic mechanism that connects the reading of classical Arabic texts with students' linguistic and local cultural experiences.[20]

Within the domain of semiotics, this study's findings indicate that Pegon Madura functions as a sign system that mediates the sacred significance of the Arabic language and the social realities of the Madurese population. Peirce's semiotic framework elucidates that a sign not only signifies an object but also facilitates interpretation within a social context. These findings extend this perspective by demonstrating that Pegon operates as a cultural icon, linking Islamic teachings with local identity through the assimilation of sound structures and meanings pertinent to local communities.[8]

From a sociolinguistic perspective, this study corroborates Fishman's foundational theory of language maintenance, asserting that language communities sustain their linguistic identity through socially and religiously pertinent adaptive mechanisms. In the context of Madurese, this mechanism is exemplified by Pegon, which not only preserves the liturgical function of the Arabic language but also reinforces the Madurese language's identity within daily religious practices.[13] These findings address a notable gap in the existing literature by elucidating how Arabic scripts can be structurally adapted to fulfill the phonological requirements of regional languages.

The contribution of this research to the study of pesantren literacy is also of considerable significance. Pegon's adaptable and frequently unpredictable vocalization system indicates that pesantren literacy operates within the oral-written continuum as described by Ong, wherein oral memorization influences the graphic representation of text. The findings of this study demonstrate that Pegon Madura constitutes a form of religious literacy that depends not only on visual representation but also on phonological components and local cultural contexts. Consequently, this reinforces the conclusion that the regional language serves as the primary medium for transmitting religious knowledge within Islamic boarding schools.[21]

Overall, this research addresses three primary gaps in the scientific literature. Firstly, it documents the orthographic structure of Pegon Madura using primary manuscript data that have not previously been subjected to systematic analysis.[28] Secondly, this research delineates Pegon's pedagogical role within the pesantren setting as a hermeneutic instrument and a method for internalizing meaning.[24] Thirdly, this study demonstrates that Pegon serves as an expression of religious and cultural identity, developed through inventive adaptations between Arabic and Madurese.[32] Therefore, this research not only advances the fields of linguistics and philology but also enhances understanding of the dynamics of Islamic literacy in the archipelago, grounded in the dialogue between authoritative texts and local contexts.

CONCLUSION

This research has successfully addressed the primary issues concerning the orthographic structure, linguistic function, and cultural significance of the Madura Pegon Arabic script through an extensive analysis of three principal manuscripts utilized within the pesantren tradition. The findings indicate that Pegon Madura is an adaptable orthographic system that not only modifies Arabic characters to represent local phonemes but also functions as a hermeneutic instrument that enhances the comprehension of classical Arabic texts within the linguistic and cultural framework of the Madurese community. Consequently, this study has empirically demonstrated that Pegon Madura functions as a medium of religious literacy, thereby reinforcing the linguistic and spiritual identity of local populations.

The research findings also hold significant implications for the future development of linguistic and literacy studies concerning Islam in the archipelago. Pegon Madura is demonstrated to be not merely a textual heritage, but also a knowledge system established through the interaction between Arabic and Madurese within pesantren educational settings. An understanding of graphemic structure, vocalization systems, and interline glossary practices facilitates further exploration of the relationship between local orthography and the dynamics of religious education. Furthermore, findings on Pegon's semiotic function as a symbol of cultural identity indicate that this script remains relevant in fostering the spiritual and cultural awareness of the Madurese community.

In the future, several recommendations can be submitted. First, a more systematic documentation of Madura Pegon variants across various Islamic boarding schools and regions is necessary to reinforce efforts to preserve traditional literacy. Secondly, interdisciplinary research involving linguistics, anthropology, and philology should be expanded to enhance understanding of Pegon's relationship to social practices and religious rituals. Thirdly, integrating Pegon into modern educational media, such as the digitization of manuscripts, the development of learning applications, and the incorporation into pesantren curricula, will represent a strategic approach to ensuring the continuity of Islamic literacy within the archipelago amidst technological advancements. Through these measures, the study of Madura Pegon will not only contribute to cultural preservation but also pave the way for new directions in strengthening the scientific traditions of Islamic boarding schools.

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