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## ***Belo Bellen* as Compulsory Delivery in Aceh Singkil Wedding; 'Urf and Islamic Law Anthropology Review**

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### **Abstract:**

This article aims to discuss *belo bellen* (big betel) as a mandatory delivery for the groom to the bride in the community of Gunung Meriah District, Aceh Singkil Regency. It is delivered at the time of *mengarak* (providing the groom to the residence of the bride's parents) of the wedding reception. This research is qualitative with an ethnographic approach. Data collection techniques were through in-depth interviews and observation supported by relevant literature data. Data were then analyzed

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qualitatively, namely through data condensation and presentation then and drawing. This research found that mandatory *belo bellen* delivery has been practiced for a long time and therefore becomes one of the legacies. *Belo bellen* take and give is made on the second night of the wedding party, attended by women. The function of *belo bellen* is to fulfill the custom, namely giving souvenirs of big betel to the bride's family. The tradition is considered as a good deed according to 'urf (Islamic legal context). In the anthropology of Islamic law, the tradition reflects the legal culture, legal behavior, and legal views of Aceh Singkil people.

**Keywords:**

*Belo Bellen; Compulsory; Walimat al-'Urs; 'Urf; Islamic Law Anthropology*

**Introduction**

Marriage in Indonesia has been concretely regulated in the form of legislation, starting from the Law containing material regulations to formal regulations.<sup>1</sup> This aims to overcome marriage problems which do occur a lot. It cannot be separated from the fact that marriage is not only related to personal affairs and desires of two married people but also intersects with economic, cultural and political sectors that involve many parties.<sup>2</sup> The law and marriage registration are also intended so that marriages are legally recognized and the couple obtains rights as citizens.

Not only in state law or positive law, marriage is also related to the customary law order or also customary law in society.<sup>3</sup> This is because basically, validity of a marriage depends on each religion and belief,<sup>4</sup> so the existence of custom in marriage is very dominant in

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<sup>1</sup> Umar Haris Sanjaya and Aunur Rahim Faqih, *Hukum Perkawinan Islam* (Yogyakarta: Gama Media, 2017), 8.

<sup>2</sup> Stephanie Coontz, *Marriage, a History: From Obedience to Intimacy, or How Love Conquered Marriage* (New York: Penguin Book, 2005), 6.

<sup>3</sup> Yuni Roslaili, "Kajian 'Urf tentang Adat Ranub Kong Haba dan Akibat Pembatalannya di Aceh," *Samarah* 3, no. 2 (2019): 417-37, <https://doi.org/10.22373/sjhk.v3i2.5192>.

<sup>4</sup> Siti Marlina Masputri, "Tinjauan Hukum Islam terhadap Pemberian Uang Adat (Selemek Semanis) dalam Perkawinan Adat Melayu Jambi," *ADHKI: Journal of Islamic Family Law* 1, no. 1 (2019): 57-74, <https://doi.org/10.37876/adhki.v1i1.2>.

determining validity and recognition in society. Marriage practices often display traditional identities for groups or communities, especially those in certain geographical locations. Each community has its own unique and sacred traditions, such as certain taboos which can cause bad luck and misfortune for the couple and the family at large.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, in some societies, the absence of ceremonies or fulfillment of traditional requirements can have consequences for postponing or canceling marriages.

Among others, *belo bellen* delivery in the Gunung Meriah community, Aceh Singkil Regency, Nanggroe Aceh Darussalam Province (NAD), is a distinctive tradition. It is a part of a mandatory in marriage for some Acehnese communities. The groom's family carries *belo bellen* twice, namely at *tandek sintua* (engagement) event and at *walimat al-'urs* (wedding party). This delivery must be provided before the marriage contract (*'aqd an-nikāh*) taking place at the bride's residence. Otherwise, customary rules prohibit the groom from executing the marriage contract and require him to pay a sum of money for violating the custom. If it is still not paid, the marriage contract is threatened with cancellation. This demonstrates the powerful influence of custom despite its exclusion from marriage requirement in Islam because the locals—the majority of whom are Muslims—believe that it does determine whether a marriage is valid or invalid.

Some research about *hantaran* (delivery) at the time of *walimat al-'urs* has been conducted. Those researchers, among others, observed marriage of Betawi Tribe,<sup>6</sup> Lampung community,<sup>7</sup> and

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<sup>5</sup> Irum Sheikh, Hafeez-ur-Rehman, and Arab Naz, "An Ethnographic Study of Marriage System and the Runaway Brides of Kalash," *Middle East Journal of Scientific Research* 16, no. 10 (2013): 1393–1402, <https://doi.org/10.5829/idosi.mejsr.2013.16.10.11990>.

<sup>6</sup> Jenny Sista Siregar and Lulu Hikmayanti Rochelman, "Seserahan dalam Perkawinan Adat Betawi: Sejarah dan Makna Simbolis," *Jurnal Ilmu Sosial dan Humaniora* 4, no. 1 (2021): 67, <http://jayapanguspress.penerbit.org/index.php/ganaya>; Syarifudin Syarifudin, M. Mujib Qalyubi, and Irfan Hasanudin, "Tinjauan Hukum Islam terhadap Prosesi Seserahan dalam Pernikahan Adat Betawi (Studi Kasus Masyarakat Betawi Kedoya Selatan Kecamatan Kebon Jeruk, Kota Adm. Jakarta Barat)," *Mozaic Islam Nusantara* 5, no. 2 (2019): 103–30, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.47776/mozaic.v5i2.141>; Mohamad Abdun Nasir, "Negotiating Muslim Interfaith Marriage in Indonesia: Integration and Conflict in Islamic Law," *Mazahib Jurnal Pemikiran Hukum Islam* 21, no. 2 (2022): 155–86, <https://doi.org/10.21093/mj.v21i2.5436>.

Malay Tribe. However, the phenomenon of *belo bellen* still gets relatively little attention.<sup>8</sup> In fact, *belo bellen* is full of symbol and values as clearly seen from its complete equipment and materials as well as the way those accessories are put together, brought to and received, until being shared to family members of the bride. Its existence also closely relates to some important series of the marriage process which make the *belo bellen* compulsory item to fulfill for those who want to get married. This article therefore discusses the obligatory of *belo bellen hantaran* (delivery) in Gunung Meriah as well as its 'urf analysis and Islamic law anthropology review. The two perspectives are considered relevant for the research subjects considering its long time maintained legacy, a main criteria of 'urf in one hand and manifestation of abundant values and symbols living among people in a specific location and tradition on the other hand.

## Methods

To understand the practice of *belo bellen*, this article uses qualitative research type with an ethnographic approach.<sup>9</sup> In ethnographic research, the researcher seeks to obtain an *emic* (insider) perspective and reason through the data obtained from an *etic* (social, scientific, outsider) perspective.<sup>10</sup> This research was conducted in Gunung Meriah District, Aceh Singkil Regency, Aceh Province, between November 2022 and January 2023. The data sources are primary and secondary. Primary data were collected in the field through observation and interviews while secondary data were collected by reviewing relevant literature. Secondary data consists of books, scientific articles, laws, regulations, etc. Therefore, this study conducted a comprehensive review of relevant literature to identify

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<sup>7</sup> Dian Mustika and Siti Marlina, "Integrated Marriage Itsbat in Jambi City: Analyzing the Problems behind Its Implementation," *Mazahib Jurnal Pemikiran Hukum Islam* 18, no. 1 (2019): 44-75, <https://doi.org/10.21093/mj.v18i1.1344>; Agung Tri Nugroho, "Seserahan dalam Perkawinan Adat Lampung Lampung," *Sabda* 14, no. 1 (2019): 31-41, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.14710/sabda.14.1.31-41>.

<sup>8</sup> Annisa Rizki and Aslam Nur, "Philosophical Meaning of Traditional Wedding Rituals of the Singkil Tribe," *Indonesian Journal of Islamic History and Culture* 5, no. 1 (2024): 51-59, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.22373/ijihc.v5i1.4740>.

<sup>9</sup> Bambang Dwiloka and Rati Riana, *Teknik Menulis Karya Ilmiah* (Jakarta: Rineka Cipta, 2005), 80.

<sup>10</sup> David M. Fetterman, *Etnografi Langkah Demi Langkah (Penerjemah) Anton Novenanto* (Yogyakarta: Cantrik Pustaka, 2024), 47.

topics specific to the research focus.

Observations focused on the people of Gunung Meriah and the practice of carrying *belo bellen* at wedding receptions that has been prevalent. Interviews were conducted with sixteen informants: three village heads, one resident, two religious leaders, four traditional leaders, two hamlet heads, one groom's parents, one *bapak puhun* (the eldest brother of the bride or groom's mother), one *anak bayo* (son-in-law), and one *bapak memberu* (uncle in law from paternal lines). The selection of such informants was based on their knowledge and involvement with the *belo bellen* tradition. Questions are designed to ascertain their knowledge of *belo bellen*. Observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis were used to gather important information for the study. After being collected with these three data collection methods, the data is then categorized based on its relevance to the research question and then presented as narration and excerpts from interviews. Once mapped and presented, the data was analyzed by using Miles et al.'s qualitative data analysis of data condensation, data presentation, and conclusion drawing.<sup>11</sup>

## **Result and Discussion**

### **Overview of *Belo Belle*; Materials, Series of Process, and Preservation**

*Belo bellen* is regional language of Singkil which means "big betel". The communities philosophically used that term to express the *hantaran* (delivery) in traditional marriage process, although its making and delivery happens twice, namely at the engagement and the marriage commencement moments. At the engagement event, the groom's family brings *belo bellen*, *lapit* (*belo bellen* pedestal), *oleh-oleh*, chopsticks, and a long cloth to carry chopsticks. *Belo bellen* contains several leaves at the bottom layer, namely *tekhutung* (durian) leaves, *binaba* leaves, *khibu-khibu* leaves, *ketemba*, *pukpus*, *kati binuh*, and *bebekhas*. The leaves carry symbols of each that the bride and groom hope to obtain. *Terutung* leaves are believed to symbolize luck, *binaba* leaves for profit gain and *bebekhas* for whatever attempted to succeed. This sort of symbolized number of hopes is made as beginning to show serious effort in commencing a marriage process.

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<sup>11</sup> Matthew B. Miles, A. Michael Huberman, and Johnny Saldaña, *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook* (California: SAGE Publications, Inc., 2014);

Relating to this, Tgk. Alimuddin, a religious figure of Cingkam Village stated so:

“In addition to *belo bellen*, certain souvenirs are also brought to the bride-to-be. Souvenirs for engagement events have been arranged in custom, namely in the form of *genakhu cakes*, *kambang panyang*, and *kipang*. All of them are foods that are familiar to the Singkil people.”<sup>12</sup>

Apart of required materials and equipment, the making of it also requires specific situation. *Belo bellen* is made by married women in a place with *lelangit* (decorated ceiling) and *sampangan* (traditional bridal stepover) while the walls are wrapped with *tabikh* cloth (name of traditional fabric). The tradition also requires them to make it in the evening. This strengthens the assumption that the tradition carries various values beyond aiming for the smooth process of wedding and long-lasting marriage life.

On the due day, *belo bellen* package and the souvenirs are brought to the bride's home. Once the groom's family comes, *bapak puhun* (an uncle from maternal line) and *anak bayo* (son-in-law at the bride family) greet them while serving them cold drink. If the host does not have any son-in-law, they can ask any son-in-law of their relatives.<sup>13</sup> *Bapak puhun* and *anak bayo* from both groom and bride families are sit in one place while *sumpit mekata-kata* ('chopstick for talk') is in the middle of them. When they want to say something, they have to take and hold this chopstick before stating what they mean to.

This simple yet meaningful procedure is set quite well for facilitating conversation between both parties. Usually, the talk begins with discussion on how much the dowry that the bride requests. If an agreement hasn't been reached yet, the groom's family typically bargain based on their ability. In addition to the dowry, there also found another thing called *uang pengikat* ('binding money'). It is sort of down payment for the whole 'gift' that the groom will present to the bride at the marriage commencement day consisting of dowry, *uang pengikat*, and one more item called *pekhanjangan*. *Pekhanjangan* is

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<sup>12</sup> Alimuddin, Religious Figure of Cingkam Village, *Interview*, November 12, 2022.

<sup>13</sup> Khairuddin, *Khazanah Adat dan Budaya Singkil: Uncovering the Majesty of Tradition and Maintaining Culture* (Yogyakarta: Zahir Publishing, 2020), 76.

money worth at least two grams and at most five grams of gold given by the bride to her unmarried older sister, if any. It can be folded according to the number of unmarried older sisters.<sup>14</sup>

When things are set and it is agreed that the *uang pengikat* is IDR seven millions, for instance, the traditional covenant (Singkil; *mali-mali*) witnessed by head village from both sides will be pronounced.<sup>15</sup> The groom family, represented by *anak bayo*, delivers it while stating loudly; 'I promise to owe one virgin and if we fail (to pay the rest), we are willing to replace the money by paying its two folds (IDR fourteen millions) in front of the village head of both families.' The word "owe" here means that the groom family will take the bride as a new part of their family, while failing means inability of the grooms to pay the agreement, consisting of

After finishing *mali-mali*, the village head of the bride opens the *belo bellen* and sees whether the equipment is complete or not. When it turns out that something is incomplete, the village head can complain to the groom. After that, *impal* (aunt's daughter or cousin) of the bride is asked to lift *belo bellen* just above the groom's head and say "*begi bekhath belo en mo utang mu, strong kona kekhajo*" (like the weight of big betel, this is your debt, so work earnestly). It is thought that those who wish to get married will find this mention burdensome to motivate him to work hard and try to make money to cover the dowry and other expenses.

The whole things at the engagement day implies how *belo bellen* becomes not only the thing to fulfill, but also the centered values and symbols. Since its making, it already involves many people and different materials while requiring some specific situation, showing the big hope for couples' everlasting marriage beyond the big physical package of *belo bellen*. Later at the bride's home, putting it

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<sup>14</sup> Efrinaldi et al., "Urf Review of the Practice of Gold Marriage Mahar in the Community of Tanjung Senang District Bandar Lampung," *Al-Istinbath: Jurnal Hukum Islam* 7, no. 1 (2022): 287-310, <https://doi.org/10.29240/jhi.v7i1.4085>; Abi Hasan, "Pandangan 'Urf terhadap Uang Pekhanjangan dalam Perkawinan Melangkahi Kakak Kandung," *Istinbath; Jurnal Hukum dan Ekonomi Islam* 20, no. 1 (2021): 176-88, <http://www.istinbath.or.id>; Januddin Muhammad Yusuf and Nawir Yuslem, "Acehnese Dayah Ulama's Response to the Use of 'Urf in Istinbath of Fiqh Law from Islam Nusantara," *Al-Istinbath: Jurnal Hukum Islam* 8, no. 1 (2023): 291-306, <https://doi.org/10.29240/jhi.v8i1.5732>.

<sup>15</sup> Sahbuddin, Kampong Perangusan Traditional Leader, *Interview*, December 25, 2022.

among the guests and hosts indicates sincere intention and kind invitation to discuss the number or type of dowry and other gifts based on deliberation of both sides so that it will not be burdening for anyone. Putting the *belo bellen* above the groom as the last series of the engagement process then shows responsibility that he needs pay very much attention on not only for the wedding, but also for the marriage life ahead.

At the *walimat al-'urs* event, *belo bellen* contains areca nut flowers, *sago/rumbia* tree fronds, *belo jantung*, *belo melingkar*, *mekhante* areca nut, sixteen flower stalks, cotton, perfume, mace, cinnamons, tobacco, *nasi kuning* (turmeric rice), and one or two-grams gold. If the groom is not able to provide the gold, he can change it with imitated gold. All of those are wrapped by using fabrics. Meanwhile, at the top of the *belo bellen* is a shawl that has been processed (*singkil: sahokh*). Underneath is covered by cloth known as the *tudung nakan*, the side of *belo bellen* is tied with *pak-pak* cloth, and the bottom is a pedestal known as *lapi*<sup>16</sup> as can be seen in the Figure 1.



**Figure 1.** *Belo Bellen* in the traditional marriage of Aceh Singkil Communities

Figure 1 shows that *belo bellen* is covered by fabrics. The betel nut flowers are circled at the edge of the steamed boiler with the front

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<sup>16</sup> Mukhlis, Religious Leader of Kampong Seping Baru, *Interview*, December 6, 2022.



of the *sago* tree branches protruding upwards as a place for betel to depend. Additionally, sixteen flower stalks are placed in the top of the betel. The *belo jantung* is located around the perimeter of the tuber's midrib branches. This betel is in the form of a banana heart. Meanwhile, the *belo jantung* is made by the circular betel with a space in the middle. *Belo emas* means there is a yellow cloth filled with turmeric rice and gold. Therefore, it is called *belo emas*.<sup>17</sup> Compared to that of engagement day, this is far bigger and fuller of equipment, symbolizing the whole wish and prayers for the couple.

*Belo bellen* is brought to the bride's family on the second day of the wedding, in which the groom's family delivered it along with sixteen young coconuts, nine of which are carved with Singkil motifs.<sup>18</sup> The motifs are presented in Figure 2.



**Figure 2.** Carved-Young Coconut

The sixteen young coconuts, whose sample is presented in Figure 2, are usually put into burlap. They will be distributed respectively to the village head, village religious leader, *bapak puhun*, *anak bayo*, *bapak membekhu*, bride's brother, bride's grandfather, and two *penguda* (uncles). One of which is from paternal line while

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<sup>17</sup> Lokhah, One of the Parents of the Groom of Kampong Sianjo-anjo, *Interview*, January 8, 2023.

<sup>18</sup> Muslim Solin, Mr. Puhun, *Interview*, December 18, 2022.

another is from the maternal. Having that share, all of the bride's family is deemed to get one gift of carved coconut, while the rest (uncarved ones) can be given to relatives, children, or guests who are attending the party.

Additionally, Loyakh, a Tanah Bara female figure, mentioned another required thing as follow:

"In addition, the groom also brings hampers containing rice and side dishes. The side dish must contain goat head because it has become a tradition in delivering *belo bellen*. The head goat will later be given to the bride's family and will be eaten after the procession of opening *belo bellen* has been completed."<sup>19</sup>

In welcoming the guests, there will be a representative of bride's family consisting of a *geuchik* father (village head) with his wife or the head of the hamlet and his wife. The man carries *pepinangan* (a package containing betel leaf, betel nut, lime betel, and 'gambir') wrapped in yellow fabric given to the village caretaker of the groom, while his wife carries *sumpit mekata-kata* exchanged for *sumpit mekata-kata* of the groom. This exchange is meaningful in that they have been well received for each other. The carrying of them both can be seen in Figure 3.



**Figure 3.** The head of the hamlet brought *pepinangan* and his wife brought *sumpit mekata-kata*

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<sup>19</sup> Loyakh, Tanah Bara Female Figure, *Interview*, January 8, 2023.

Procedurally, *belo bellen* was brought by *anak bayo* of groom's family to the bride's house. Her family members greet the guest with yellow rice, indicating that the one who come is a great guest. Cold drinks are served and enjoyed by all guests. The groom is then led to read *shalawat* three times so that he could enter the place provided for the marriage contract commencement. At the provided spot, the bride and groom sat on a mattress with *belo bellen* behind the two. *Janang* (the expert in the feast) typically calls *bapak puhun* and the *anak bayo* from both families so that they can see the *sumpit mekata-kata* in front of them.

At that time, the groom pays IDR 210,000 as a *pemuka kata* (introductory) money to the village head or hamlet head while talking about the dowry agreed at the engagement moment. If the decided dowry is twenty grams of gold, for instance, it must be brought and immediately seen by *bapak puhun* and *anak bayo* at that time. They will see whether the gold coincides with the agreement or not. If it is appropriate, the marriage contract will be carried out soon.<sup>20</sup> Relating to this, Dayo, a Tanah Bara traditional leader stated so:

"The marriage contracts is slightly different from other regions. On Gunung Meriah, the groom's right leg squats upright, while the sole of the left foot is occupied by him along with his thumb finger is brought together by the guardians. Their hands were invisible because there was a white cloth covering them."<sup>21</sup>

The above excerpt shows how details the custom organizes everything at the marriage commencement process which is in line with the values and prayers beyond. After it is done, *belo bellen* is opened by *geuchik* of the bride to see whether the requirements are complete or not as can be seen in Figure 4.

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<sup>20</sup> Nanda, Head of Tanah Bara Village, *Interview*, November 8, 2022.

<sup>21</sup> Dayo, Tanah Bara Traditional Leader, *Interview*, December 4, 2022.



**Figure 4.** The opening of *belo bellen* after '*aqd al-nikah*

It can be seen in Figure 4 that the families check the completeness of the *belo bellen*. If it is found that the *belo bellen* is incomplete, the bride's *geuchik* has the right to refuse it providing that it will be accepted after the less conditions are completed. However, when it is complete, the *geuchik* opens a yellow cloth containing turmeric rice and gold while sprinkling plain flour on the *belo bellen*. After that, he takes the gold from *belo bellen*, a betel, and a flower. The remaining materials in *belo bellen*, meanwhile, are taken by *bapak puhun*, *anak bayo*, *bapak memberu*, *bapak penguda* (uncle), *turang* (brother of the bride), *uan* (paternal or maternal grandfather), and the last to besiege the offer is the bride's biological father. They are obliged to take betel nuts or flowers from *belo bellen*. It can be both and it can be one of them.

When all is done, the *geuchik* returned the gold to a yellow cloth containing yellow rice, ties it up, and covers the *belo bellen*. Next, *anak bayo* lift the *belo bellen* into the house and place it under the ceiling of the feast.<sup>22</sup> The groom will then come forward slightly and sits on the *lapit* (traditional mat) while the *geuchik* greets him (*Singkil: mempule*) three times by shaking his hand. After the *geuchik*, the handshake is continued to *bapak puhun* who also teaches how the groom should call him, such as saying "call me *mak tuan*."<sup>23</sup> The groom is then taught to call the *anak bayo* with *taajo* (as daily calls), *bapak membekhu* with *tutur memberu*, *penguda* with *tua*, and *turang* with *ogek*, and *uan* with the grandfather. Finally, the groom shakes hands with the bride's parents with a slight duck and kisses hands as a sign

<sup>22</sup> Samsul Bahri, Anak Bayo, *Interview*, December 15, 2022.

<sup>23</sup> Muslim Solin, Mr. Puhun, *Interview*, December 18, 2022.

of respect for the in-laws and will continue to be revered for all time. If the bride is older, the groom can call her by her name. If the bride is younger, then the groom can call her by what they agree on as there is no specific stipulation in the custom.

Learning the call while shaking hands is very important, so that when the bride and groom meet with their in-laws' family, he already knows how to call them. This will later strengthen family relationships. If it turns out that the call is wrong, it is usually corrected. When for many years he does not know the call to his in-laws' family, he will be reprimanded, so as not to get used to it. For the people of Singkil, calling with the right call is one way to appreciate their elders and it makes sense to find a special series at the wedding relating to how a new member of the family should call his family members in a right way.

After *belo bellen* is escorted into the house, it is re-opened by women families, ranging from *geuchik's* wife, *puhun's* wife, *anak bayo's* wife, *bapak membekhu's* wife,<sup>24</sup> *penguda's* wife, *turang's* wife, and *uan's* wife. This procession can be seen in Figure 5.



**Figure 5.** The *Belo bellen* is rechecked by women from the bride's family

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<sup>24</sup> Jaminuddin, Mr. Kampong Rimo, *Interview*, December 20, 2022.

It can be seen from Figure 5 that the *belo bellen* is rechecked by women of the bride's family. The contents are taken according to their rights, such as *puhun's wife* getting a betel heart (Singkil: *belo*), *anak bayo's wife* getting a betel heart pad, and the bride's mother getting a top lid made of betel.<sup>25</sup> After finishing taking the *belo bellen*, the wife of the *geuchik* closes it as before it was opened and will return it to the groom to take it home. It is obvious that *belo bellen* can mean either the contents or the package of the delivery objects at the traditional wedding of Aceh Singkil community.

*Belo bellen*, according to *Imeum Mukim Tanjung Mas* (a local government figure appointed by the regent), must exist and must not be cashed. This aims to preserve the custom even though times have changed. The custom will become the identity and special characteristics of Gunung Meriah District area differentiating it from other sub-districts.<sup>26</sup> However, in Tanjung Mas settlement area, some people do not carry *belo bellen* due to tribal differences. For example, the Javanese tribe will use Javanese customs. This is different from Singkil tribe who will use customs determined by the *mukim* or village head.

When Singkil people feast without bringing *belo bellen*, they are required to pay IDR 600,000 to the local *mukim*.<sup>27</sup> In fact, some regions set payment money many times larger. This is to punish people who prefer to leave the custom of carrying *belo bellen*. Given that this problem will have an impact on the loss of customs, the head of Ladang Bisik village, for example, sets a more expensive fine of IDR 2,100,000 for the groom who does not carry *belo bellen*.<sup>28</sup> It is in line with the statement of *Geuchik* Salman Manik who mentioned that every Tanah Bara resident who is getting married, without exception, is required to bring *belo bellen*, also known as *belo emas*. If the groom does not bring it, he is required to pay IDR 410,000 to the village head that will be shared to *bapak puhun*, *anak bayo*, *bapak memberu* and mother of the bride (Singkil: *Umak anak dara*). Additionally, he is also required to pay IDR 100,000 for the vullage head, so that the total fine numbers IDR 510,000.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Nanda, Head of Kampong Tanah Bara Hamlet, *Interview*, November 8, 2022.

<sup>26</sup> Ramadhan, Mukim Tanjung Mas, *Interview*, December 8, 2022.

<sup>27</sup> Alimuddin, Adat Kampong Cingkam, *Interview*, November 12, 2022.

<sup>28</sup> Kasih, Kepala Kampong Ladang Bisik, *Interview*, Desember 2, 2022.

<sup>29</sup> Salman Manik, Kepala Kampong Tanah Bara, *Interview*, November 2, 2022.

Likely, Ihsan Chaniago, the head of Tanah Merah village, said that those who marry Tanah Merah village girls must bring *belo bellen*. Otherwise, they will be penalized as the rule breakers to pay a sanction of IDR 410,000.<sup>30</sup> The customs in Gunung Lagan Village are also the same, as said by the head of the village. Fines will be imposed on those who do not provide *belo bellen* at the time of wedding, either intentionally or unknowingly.<sup>31</sup> From explanations above, we find that each area in Gunung Meriah District has differences in the number of sanctions for those who do not carry *belo bellen*, ranging from IDR 410.00, IDR 510,000, IDR 600,000 and even IDR 2,100,000.

The whole series, detailed equipment, additional delivery, involvement of many parties and the way in preserving *belo bellen* are clear evidence on its values and urgencies. Through those details, the locals seem to make the wedding moment as very sacred one so that the couple can live the marriage life responsibly and happily ever after. Symbols beyond the used equipment represent the unity of prayers among both families, while their involvement strengthens how marriage does not only bind two persons, but also two families. The involvement of village heads furthermore implies an effort to respect local leader besides the preservation of local tradition as the cultural legacy of the community.

#### **'Urf's and Islamic Law Anthropology Review of Bello Bellen**

Apart from being a traditional custom and to avoiding fines, the carrying of *belo bellen* during the wedding procession has its own philosophical and historical side. The custom binds the identity of the people of Gunung Meriah, Aceh Singkil Regency. Although customary law may change from time to time as people's mindsets change, most Gunung Meriah people maintain their customs, especially *belo bellen* during weddings.

The practice of bringing *belo bellen* to the bride's family from the perspective of *'urf* can lead to two possibilities, firstly, *al-'urf al-ṣaḥīḥ* (customs that are considered valid), namely customs that prevail among people that do not contradict the Qur'anic verses or hadiths, do not eliminate their benefits, nor bring harm to them; and secondly, *al-'urf al-fāsid* (habits that are considered corrupt), namely habits that

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<sup>30</sup> Ihsan Chaniago, Head of Tanah Merah Village, *Interview*, January 20, 2023.

<sup>31</sup> Karyanto, Kadus Kampong Gunung Lagan, *Interview*, December 14, 2022.

contradict the postulates of *ash-sharī'ah* and the basic rules contained in *ash-sharī'ah*.<sup>32</sup>

The scholars agree that *al-'urf al-ṣaḥīḥ* (justified) can be used as a legal basis as long as it does not contradict *ash-sharī'ah*. Meanwhile, *al-'urf al-fāsid* (unjustified) cannot be used as it contradicts the verses of the Quran and *sunnah*.<sup>33</sup> In understanding and interpreting the law, Amir Syarifuddin set several requirements to accept the '*urf*,<sup>34</sup> that is:

*First*, adat or '*urf* is of good value and is acceptable in common sense. The tradition of delivering *belo bellen* in Gunung Meriah Aceh Singkil District implies prosperity aspect of life. To comply with this cultural requirement, financial ability is certainly needed. In addition to it, it also shows wishes that big betel (*belo bellen*) is not only on the wedding delivery, but also can be reached during the marriage life;

*Second*, the custom or '*urf* is generally and evenly preserved among those within the customary sphere, or among most of its citizens. The implementation of bringing *belo bellen* for the groom's family is generally accepted because most of its citizens choose not to violate these old rules. When it is found a few rule breakers, it is only valid for those who marry persons outside Aceh Singkil community.

*Third*, the '*urf* on which the law depended was already in existence at that time, not the '*urf* that came later. This means that the '*urf* must have existed before the establishment of the law. The tradition of bringing *belo bellen* existed before the establishment of the law, namely positive law in Indonesian Marriage Law. This means that the tradition has been carried out by local people who then came to their legal provisions to be relied upon.

*Fourth*, the custom does not contradict and ignore the existing *syara'* postulate or the definite principle. Customs contrary to Islamic law become the corrupted '*urf* that should not be preserved. If we take a closer look at the delivery of *belo bellen*, it is only a souvenir from the groom's extended family to the bride made of *belo bellen* and other

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<sup>32</sup> Rafiq Al-'Ajam, *Mawsū'ah Muṣṭalahāt Uṣūl Al-Fiqh 'Inda Al-Muslimīn* (Beirut: Maktabah Lubnan Nasyirun, 1998), 65.

<sup>33</sup> Desi Asmaret, Alaidin Koto, and Afrizal, "Transformasi Hukum Keluarga Islam di Indonesia: Telaah Pemikiran Rifyal Ka'bah," *Al-Ahwal* 12, no. 2 (2019): 145–60, <https://doi.org/10.14421/ahwal.2019.12203>; Ach Maimun, "Memperkuat 'Urf dalam Pengembangan Hukum Islam," *Al-Ihkam: Jurnal Hukum & Pranata Sosial* 12, no. 1 (2017): 22, <https://doi.org/10.19105/al-ihkam.v12i1.1188>.

<sup>34</sup> Al-'Ajam, *Mawsū'ah Muṣṭalahāt Uṣūl Al-Fiqh 'Inda Al-Muslimīn*.



materials without any single *haram* (unlawful) object. Therefore, it is deemed not contrary to the *shara'*.

Based on the above requirements of *al-'urf al-ṣaḥīḥ*, the tradition of *hantaran* (delivery) *belo bellen* has fulfilled the requirements from point (1) to point (4) and therefore justified in religion. Moreover, into some extent, the spirit of delivering *belo bellen* is in line with the purpose beyond the regulation of dowry, namely to symbolize the marriage, in both culture and religions respectively while restating shared responsibility to the couple in keeping their marriage in a good condition.

Furthermore, *belo bellen* reflects legal culture, legal behavior and legal views of Aceh Singkil people. The law that generates any tradition is not written and agreed upon by the government. Instead, it is agreed by the local community which makes it unique and different from one another. This is in accordance with the opinion of Tajul Arifin who states that the law was born and developed from a culture so that non-uniformity of the law in each place or the uniqueness of the law beyond the tradition of a particular place becomes something natural.<sup>35</sup> Customary law is the entire legal regulation that contains provisions of customs of entire Indonesian nation with hundreds of ethnic groups, each of which with customs based on their respective worldviews.<sup>36</sup> The *belo bellen* tradition is a rich contribution to the plurality of marriage law styles in Indonesia with its distinctive styles and details reflecting local legacy in both physically and spiritually.

In Indonesia itself, the existence of customary law and traditional rights is recognized and respected by the 1945 Constitution as long as it is still in line with and follows the development of the state's principles. In traditional societies, marriage is something important and needs to be bound by custom because marriage contains sacred values so that it should not deviate from state law, religious law or customary law. Indonesian marriage law was adapted from religious and customary law. For indigenous people,

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<sup>35</sup> Tajul Arifin, *Antropologi Hukum Islam* (Bandung: Pusat Penelitian dan Penerbitan UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung, 2016), 3.

<sup>36</sup> Dessy Artina, "The Existence of Traditional Law on Ethical Marriage in Ganting Village, Salo District Linked to Islamic Law," in *Proceedings of the 2nd Riau Annual Meeting on Law and Social Sciences (RAMLAS 2021)*, vol. 659, 2022, 18–22, <https://doi.org/10.2991/assehr.k.220406.004>.

marriage is a matter of concern for the entire indigenous community alliance concerning kinship, lineage, and others. Therefore, a wedding is usually accompanied by a reception guest organized in accordance with the customs and habits of the local community. The culture of wedding reception sometimes forces people to organize this in as fit as possible manner with the traditional habits. When parents marry off their children without a wedding reception, consequently, they may face social sanctions.<sup>37</sup>

Therefore, marriage is not as simple as an agreement between two people who are willing to enter a marriage life. Neither is it completely the same as religious teaching which only requires the couple, the guardian of the bride, the witnesses, and the dowry. Further than that, it is a tradition which plays a major role in constructing whether a marriage is considered correct or not from the perspective of local community traditions. The standards of marriage validity in *belo bellen*, in this context, are organized in a great detail of rules and conditions.

In addition, the *belo bellen* tradition shows how marriage is not only a private matter between the two families of the bride and groom. The involvement of the village heads also plays a significant role in the tradition, even the village heads of both parties. Although *belo bellen* is a local tradition, it cannot be separated from the influence of religion, namely Islam, through the concept of dowry. Dowry is well known in the Islamic world as *mahar*, a significant aspect regulated in the articles and laws of family law in Islamic countries such as Morocco, Jordan, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Egypt, Syria, etc. The implementation of dowry payment in various Muslim societies in the world is inseparable from the teachings of Islam which requires

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<sup>37</sup> Hazar Kusmayanti et al., "Judges' Acceptance of Sharia-Inspired Laws in Indonesia," *Al-Manahij: Jurnal Kajian Hukum Islam* 17, no. 2 (2023): 199-214, <https://doi.org/10.24090/mnh.v17i2.7716>; Ramadhan Syahmedi Siregar, Muhammad Syakban, and Muhammad Ikhlas Bin Rosele, "The Role of Marriage Guardian of the Same Clan in the Traditional Marriage of Batak Toba Muslims in Samosir Regency in the Perspective of Islamic Law," *Al-Manahij: Jurnal Kajian Hukum Islam* 17, no. 1 (2023): 41-52, <https://doi.org/10.24090/mnh.v17i1.6750>; Ryan Taufika et al., "Overview of Traditional Law in the Use of Mayam as Mahar in Aceh Traditional Marriage," *Jurnal Civics: Media Kajian Kewarganegaraan* 18, no. 2 (October 2021): 296-303, <https://doi.org/10.21831/jc.v18i2.44945>.

dowry in marriage as a valid condition of marriage commencement.<sup>38</sup> It is therefore clear that *belo bellen* tradition is a result of a dialectic between the local traditions of Aceh Singkil and the belief in Islam.

The practice of *pekhanjangan* or the giving of '*uang pelangkah*' for a bride is also known in various ethnicities in Indonesia. *Uang pelangkah* is money that a bride gives to her unmarried older sister because of stepping her over in entering married life. In such cases, it is customary that set *uang pelangkah* an obligation to pay before the wedding as an honor and an instrument, as the community believes, to prevent any calamities. There is no clear regulation of *uang pelangkah* in Islamic law, but it is something acceptable and not prohibited due to its good purpose.<sup>39</sup>

Many studies have examined the compatibility between religious law and positive law governing marriage. In this study, it can be seen that in marriage of the people of Aceh Singkil, customary law (in addition to religious law and positive law) still has a strong influence and determines whether a wedding goes well and in harmony. In addition, there is a dialectic between the three laws in regulating marriage by enforcing typical characteristics of Aceh Singkil people.

## **Conclusion**

From the making, delivery, to the share of the materials, *belo bellen* has involved many people. It is made by married women among the groom's family along with the men carvings Singkil motifs on young coconuts. After delivered, it is shared among bride's family, including the bride herself. This implies unification not only between two people, but also two families along with shared hopes and good wishes for the couple. From the perspective of '*urf* (the context of Islamic law) *belo bellen* is one of the good deeds, namely gifts from the groom's family to the bride's family as a sort of improvisation from

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<sup>38</sup> Qodariah Barkah, "Kedudukan dan Jumlah Mahar di Negara Muslim," *AHKAM: Jurnal Ilmu Syariah* 14, no. 2 (2014): 279-86, <https://doi.org/10.15408/ajis.v14i2.1286>.

<sup>39</sup> Alya Nawa Chandra and Gatot Efrianto, "Analisis Yuridis Terhadap Uang Pelangkah Pernikahan Adat Betawi di Bekasi Ditinjau dari Hukum Adat dan Hukum Islam," *Jurnal Hukum Sasana* 9, no. 2 (2024): 377-400, <https://doi.org/10.31599/mmh32098>.

the concept of dowry. In Islamic law anthropology, the tradition reflects the legal culture, legal behavior, and legal views of Aceh Singkil people; well applied, not written and agreed upon by the government but agreed by the local community. The fact that this study did not compare the mandatory delivery practices during *walimat al-'urs* across the Archipelago comprehensively is one of its weaknesses. Consequently, the authors suggest conducting additional research before examining the background of mandatory delivery policies in different regions of Indonesia. It would be preferable to compare mandatory delivery policies in other districts of Aceh province or other areas that are still part of the Sumatra Island region.

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