Dialectics Between Islam and Local Culture in *Wetu Telu* Lombok Muslims' *Merariq* Tradition: An *'Urf* Perspective

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Abstract:
This article discusses dialectical teachings between Islam and local culture among *Wetu Telu* Muslims, a local community in Lombok, which is often accused of developing a prototype of Islamic teachings mixed with deviant, heterodox, and heretical traditions. The discussion focuses on one form of their traditions that reflects the dialectics, namely the *merariq* in wedding tradition. By applying a qualitative approach, this study specifically portrayed relevant views of *Wetu Telu* Muslims which are relatively different from that of orthodox Muslims in Lombok. Based on the results of participatory observation and unstructured in-depth interviews, the study findings reveal that the traditions of the *Wetu Telu* Muslims, especially in *merariq*, reflect a dialectical teaching between Islam and local culture so that it can be named as an Islamic tradition. It is also clear that *Wetu Telu*'s teachings are extremely tolerant to the local culture and this is proven, among others, through their wedding

tradition. From the *'Urf* perspective, *merariq* wedding tradition is legitimate for recognition as an Islamic culture or Islamic legal practice even though some aspects of the tradition differ from the general principles of Islamic orthodoxy in Indonesia.

Keywords:
Islam; Local Culture; Dialectics; *Merariq*; *'Urf*

Introduction

One of the Islamic expressions in Lombok showing a vibrant interrelation with local culture is presented by local Muslims called *Wetu Telu.* The term closely relates to the Wetu Telu teachings relying on the spirit "three" in cosmological beliefs, namely theological doctrines, system of reproduction, and system of law.[1] This community is now centered in Bayan, a subdistrict in the North Lombok district of West Nusa Tenggara Province, Indonesia.[2] The Bayan area itself is a place of the first arrival of Islam to Lombok Island in the 13th century.[3] The Javanese preachers led by Sunan Prapen landed in the north coast of Lombok which later they named "Bayan".[4] It is commonly believed that at that time, the Sunan and Bayan leaders agreed that they would embrace Islam on the condition that they were still allowed to carry out their customs.[5] Therefore, many outsiders consider the Islamic beliefs and expressions of the *Wetu Telu* Muslims to be imperfect because they have mixed up Islamic teachings with elements of local culture. This idea of "imperfection" has stigmatized them as nominal Muslims—who do not practice the Islamic law "correctly". The "nominal

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[1] Fawaizul Umam, *Membangun Resistensi, Merawat Tradisi: Modal Sosial Komunitas Wetu Telu* (Mataram: Lembaga Kajian Islam dan Masyarakat, 2006), 8.

[2] Ahmad Salehudin, "The Sasak People of Lombok: Indigenous Communities at the Crossroads of Globalization," *Al-Albab* 8, no. 2 (2019): 281–97, https://doi.org/10.24260/alalbab.v8i2.1416.

[3] Sven Cederroth, *The Spell of the Ancestors and the Power of Mekkah: A Sasak Community on Lombok* (Sweden: ACTA Universitatis Gothoburgensis, 1981), 81.

[4] Jamaludin, "Salut as a Gate For the Coming of Islam in Lombok: Archaeological Analysis of the Ancient Mosque in North Lombok," *Heritage of Nusantara: International Journal of Religious Literature and Heritage* 7, no. 1 (2018): 46–78, https://doi.org/10.31291/hn.v7i1.513.

[5] Cederroth, *The Spell of the Ancestors and the Power of Mekkah: A Sasak Community on Lombok*, 32.

Muslims" is Geertz's term for *abangan*, one of three variants of Javanese Islam besides *santri* and *priyayi*.[6]

A number of studies have confirmed that theological stigma against the *Wetu Telu* still occurs within Sasak communities today, as Budiwanti,[7] Avonius,[8] and Suprapto[9] had stated. These heretical claims bolstered the elites of orthodox Sasak Muslims to launch *da'wah islāmiyah* at the heart of the *Wetu Telu*'s culture in Bayan. The claims had also been used often by *tuan guru*[10] with their effort to "enlighten" the *Wetu Telu* Muslims through systematic preaching (*da'wah*) that remains strong to this day.[11] These have made them increasingly marginalized culturally in almost all cultural areas in Lombok.[12]

This research studies one of *Wetu Telu*'s traditions with the *'Urf* perspective, an Islamic legal maxim (*qā'idah fiqhiyyah*) that postulates tradition as a consideration in determining the law.[13] It is relevant to use as a perspective because the *Wetu Telu*'s tradition reflects the dialectic of Islam and local culture. In this context, dialectics is theoretically defined as the process of opposition between two opposites,[14] namely between religion (Islam) and local culture which then produces a new tradition named *Wetu Telu*. Specifically, this definition refers to the Hegelian perspective based on the dialectical

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[6] Clifford Geertz, *The Religion of Java* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1976).

[7] Erni Budiwanti, *Islam Sasak: Wetu Telu versus Waktu Lima* (Yogyakarta: LKíS, 2000).

[8] Leena Avonius, "Reforming Adat: Indonesian Indigenous People in the Era of Reformasi," *The Asia Pacific Journal of Anthropology* 4, no. 2 (2003): 123–42, https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1080/14442210310001706417.

[9] Suprapto, "Sasak Muslims and Interreligious Harmony: Ethnographic Study of the Perang Topat Festival in Lombok - Indonesia," *Journal of Indonesian Islam* 11, no. 1 (2017): 77–98, https://doi.org/10.15642/JIIS.2017.11.1.77-98.

[10] Fahrurrozi, "Tuan Guru and Social Change in Lombok, Indonesia," *Indonesia and the Malay World* 46, no. 135 (2018): 117–34, https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1080/13639811.2018.1452487.

[11] Erni Budiwanti, "The Role of Wali, Ancient Mosques and Sacred Tombs in the Dynamics of Islamisation in Lombok," *Heritage of Nusantara: International Journal of Religious Literature and Heritage* 3, no. 1 (2015): 17–46, https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.31291/hn.v3i1.18.

[12] Ahmad Fathan Aniq, "Lombok Islam in the Eyes of Anthropologists," *Alqalam* 28, no. 2 (2011): 197, https://doi.org/10.32678/alqalam.v28i2.1372.

[13] Alī Ḥasab Allāh, *Uṣūl Al-Tashrī' Al-Islāmī* (Egypt: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1971), 311.

[14] Dictionary, "Dialectic," *Merriam-Webster.Com*, May 6, 2024, https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/dialectic.

trilogy,[15] namely thesis (Islam), antithesis (local culture), and synthesis (*Wetu Telu* tradition).

With the '*Urf* perspective, this study offers a dissenting view of the *Wetu Telu* Muslims' tradition. It proposes a thesis that *Wetu Telu* traditions are expressions of the enriched Indonesian Islam. The traditions celebrate a dialectic between Islam and local culture and therefore *Wetu Telu* is a legitimate Islamic tradition even though it differs from mainstream Islam. To strengthen the thesis, this study focuses on one of the *Wetu Telu* traditions, namely the *merariq* wedding tradition, because it most visibly reflects the dialectical intertwining of Islam and local culture. To be systematic, this article begins with a description of the *merariq* and its dialectics then discusses it from the '*Urf* perspective ended with the conclusion.

Methods

This study is based on qualitative field research. Its design used a case study, precisely on social community studies. It specifically chose Bayan as a locus of study where the presence of *Wetu Telu*'s traditions remains strong.[16] All data is collected through participatory observation, literature review, and unstructured interviews.

Participatory observation was used to understand the *merariq* wedding tradition; it was specifically carried out during two wedding events in January and April 2022 respectively. Meanwhile, the literature review was to collect data regarding their history and socio-cultural dynamics and also to enrich '*Urf* perspective through a critical review of the classical *fiqh* treasures. Meanwhile, snowball interviews started with key informants selected based on their significant role in establishing the cultural institutions of *Wetu Telu* in Bayan. They are the *Wetu Telu*'s leaders, such as *pemangku* (the highest customary leader), *penghulu* (rituals' spiritual leader), *pembekel* (the coordinating customary official), *perumbaq* (the guardians of the ancestral graveyard and sacred forest), *pembangar* (the customary official of ritual for planting season and house building), *toaq lokaq* (the customary elders),

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[15] Peter Singer, *Hegel: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 99–103.

[16] Zaenudin Mansyur, "Self-Esteem and Fixed Price in Islamic Law (A Critical Study of the Pesuke Tradition among the Nobles of the Sasak Tribe of Lombok)," *Al-Ihkam: Jurnal Hukum dan Pranata Sosial* 16, no. 1 (2021): 180–206, https://doi.org/10.19105/AL-LHKAM.V16I1.4996.

kiai (the customary cleric), *lebe* or *mudim* (customary leaders for rituals; guardian of the ancient mosque), head of the village, and *keliang dusun* (head of sub-village).

After the validation, all interview and observation results are described critically and then analyzed and interpreted using the *'Urf* perspective. All descriptions of the stages of *merariq* are interpreted as dialectical manifestations between Islam and local culture. The *'Urf* is used as a perspective to give *fiqhiyah* legitimacy to this dialectic and then concluded as an anthropological necessity whenever religion (Islam) comes into contact with local culture.

Result and Discussion
Merariq **Tradition**

In Bayan, religion and culture are mutually reinforcing and inseparable from each other's.[17] The systems, patterns, and ethos of culture have influenced symbols, patterns, and content of religiosity and vice versa.[18] This confirms the notion that there is no religion arising from a cultural vacuum. Every religion always arises from a dialectic between religion and the local culture of the place of origin.[19] *Wetu Telu's* tradition, in this talk, is one of the proofs of how dialectics work.

In the wedding tradition of Sasak Muslims in general, there are three procedural ways: (1) *perondongan* (arranged marriage), (2) *mepadik lamar* (proposed marriage), and (3) *merariq* or *selarian* (elopement). However, in the *Wetu Telu* Muslim tradition, only the *merariq* serves as the main socio-cultural institution in implementing marriage customs. RSH, a young leader of Bayan, emphasized why they only recognize *merariq* as the only marriage procedure:[20]

> "Yes, that's right... only *merariq* is traditionally recognized here (Bayan). According to our elders, this marriage is also about honor and self-esteem. We highly honor girls, they

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[17] Muhammad Ahyar, "Islam Bayan: An Analysis of Religious Behavior on Gama and Luir Gama Traditional Ceremonies in Lombok Ntb," *International Journal of Social Science* 2, no. 6 (2023): 2377–90, https://doi.org/10.53625/ijss.v2i6.5410.

[18] RSH, Interview, May 2022.

[19] Al Dueck et al., "Western Cultural Psychology of Religion: Alternatives to Ideology," *Pastoral Psychology* 66, no. 3 (2017): 397–425, https://doi.org/10.1007/s11089-016-0731-3.

[20] RSH, Interview, May 2022.

are precious. If there is a man who wants to marry her, he must fight by stealing from us, not come asking for her (proposing). For us, *merariq* is a symbol of a man's courage to take on the responsibility of starting a household. The man also has to prepare a proper offering to the woman's family, it's a customary consequence for having run away with our daughters…."

Merariq or *merariang* in the *Wetu Telu* tradition is a marriage step carried out by kidnapping or taking away a woman to the family home of a man who wants to marry her. The marriage stages can be seen in Figure 1.
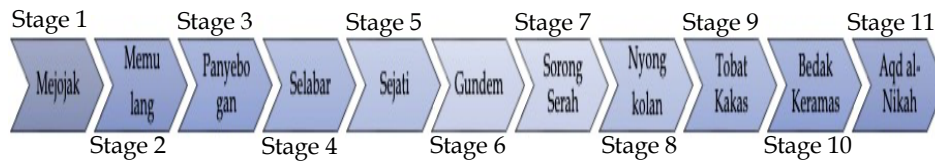
Figure 1. Marriage Stages in *Wetu Telu* Traditional Marriage

It can be seen from Figure 1 that marriage stages in *Wetu Telu* communities consist of 11 stages. First, the man visits the woman's house (*mejojak*) with the aim of getting to know each other and agreeing to get married. If the two agree, they then set a time and plan to kidnap the woman from her house and then hide her at a house of the man's family.[21]

The process of kidnapping (*memulang*) must be carried out at night between of Maghrib and Isha prayers times (approximately 18.00-19.15 p.m.); If it is done outside this time, the man will be subject to customary sanctions. On a predetermined night and with a well-arranged strategy, the man approaches the woman's house while giving signals, such as whistling, clapping, or other signals, as a sign that he is ready to take the woman away. Then, the woman secretly meets the man and runs away together leaving the house to a designated hiding place (*penyeboqan),* namely the house of the man's family, relatives, or friends. In *penyeboqan*, the woman is hidden for a while until the *selabar* process (the groom's family visits the bride's family home to affirm the commitment to marriage). As for the

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[21] RSH, Interview, May 2022.

woman's family, after confirming that their daughter has been "kidnapped" for marriage, they wait for notification (*sejati*) from the "kidnapper's" family.[22]

Sejati or *mesejati* is a notification to the woman's family. This is the first customary action that the man's family must take after their son takes away someone's daughter by sending a messenger (*pembayun*). The message is delivered to the woman's parents or family through a head of the village (*keliang*) where the woman and her parents or family live. This must be done no later than three days after *memulang*; if the period exceeds three days, the man will be subject to customary sanctions.[23] After receiving *sejati*, the *keliang* immediately informs the woman's parents.

After that, the couple's families hold a traditional meeting called *selabar* or *pemuput selabar*. This meeting is usually carried out three days after *sejati*. This is a deliberative forum (*gundem*) to discuss and agree on the amount of *ajikrama* or *sajikrama*, namely offerings from the man's family to the woman's family that have been determined by custom; This is a customary requirement for the implementation of the next stage up to the *'aqd al-nikāh*. The number of *ajikrama* is adjusted to the socio-cultural status of the bride. If she comes from aristocratic circles, the *ajikrama* set is usually high so it is often burdensome for the groom's family. *Ajikrama* can also be called a marriage fine that must be paid by the groom for "kidnapping" someone's daughter to marry; he must be sentenced to pay a fine because he is deemed to have violated the honor of the community where the bride's family lives. The *selabar* event is held at the home of the woman's parents or closest family at the *berugaq sekenem* (a meeting place to welcome special guests) which is witnessed and mediated by traditional leaders, such as *keliang*, *toaq lokaq*, and *pemangku*.[24]

Ajikrama is a customary fine, not a dowry. If the dowry is intended and is the full right of the bride, *ajikrama* is intended for many parties. It is not only for the bride's family but also for her mother as a redeemer of breast milk, needs of *tampah wirang*, also for village treasuries, mosque treasuries, educational institutions, as well as security officers and witnesses who take part in the *gundem*. In addition,

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[22] RSH, Interview.

[23] AR, Bayan *adat* elder, Interview, April 2022.

[24] AR, Bayan *adat* elder, Interview.

although the dowry and *ajikrama* can both be postponed according to the agreement, the *ajikrama* can be paid from the joint assets of the bride and groom, while the dowry is only the husband's obligation and is paid from his own assets. At the *selabar* forum, representatives of the bride's families submit a list of offering items that the groom's families had to fulfill as customary fine (*ajikrama*).[25] In this forum, the groom's representatives usually try to reduce the amount of *ajikrama*, while the bride's family tries to maintain the proposal or even increase it. In this process, protracted bargaining often takes place so that sometimes an event of this *selabar* is not completed in one meeting. Frequently, multiple meetings must be held considering that for the bride's big family, the height of *the ajikrama* automatically increases their cultural prestige so they try to survive with the demands of the amount of *ajikrama*.[26] When the amount of *ajikrama* is agreed upon by both parties, the goal of *pemuput selabar* has been achieved.

The next stage is *sorong serah* ceremony. It is a stage of handing over *ajikrama* from the groom's family to the bride's family. This handover ceremony is represented by the *pembayun* of the groom's family and accepted by the *pembayun* of the bride's family. This ceremony is then followed by the *nyongkolan*, namely the ceremony of taking the bride and groom to visit the bride's parents' house which is usually attended by extended family, relatives, friends, and all of the *adat* communities to form a mass procession accompanied by the beat of *gendang beleq* (big drum; a traditional Lombok music). The *nyongkolan* is considered finished when the group of *gendang beleq* musicians have been served drinks. In the *Wetu Telu* wedding tradition, *nyongkolan* is an announcement to the public that the bride and groom are married.[27]

After arriving at the bride's house, the couples are placed in the middle of a row of *dulang* (food containers in the form of cakes and fruit). Both are asked to feed each other as a symbolic form of love and loyalty (*hamukti ketresnan*). After that, both of them are invited to change their clothes through the *bedudus* event, namely being bathed in water with various flowers with the aim of making them successful in

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[25] AR, Bayan *adat* elder, Interview.

[26] JB and MHO, two young leaders of *Wetu Telu,* Interview, March 2022; RNM, interview, April 2022.

[27] RNM, Interview, April 2022.

a new life. After that, the bride and groom return home to the groom's family house with the entire group accompanied by the *gendang beleq*.[28]

After the *nyongkolan*, the bride and groom carry out the *tobat kakas* ceremony. It takes place in the groom's house and is led by an *inaq belian* (shaman). The most important procession of the marriage blessing ritual is *bedak keramas* which is symbolically intended as a form of repentance for the bride and groom. In the process, the *inaq belian* bathes and shampoos the heads of both with turmeric mixture, grated coconut or coconut milk, and *kencur* rice (*bedak lengeh*) which was previously recited by the *kiai*. After being smeared with the mixture, both of them are invited to clean themselves and then prepare to start the *'aqd al-nikāh* process.[29]

The entire series of *merariq* traditions culminates with the *ngawinang* ceremony (*'aqd al-nikāh*). It is led directly by the head of the Religious Affairs Office (Kantor Urusan Agama, KUA). With the completion of the *'aqd al-nikāḥ*, the bride and groom legally become wife and husband, both according to customary law, Islamic law, and state law.[30] After that, it is usually continued with holding *tampah wirang* (wedding party; *walīmat al-'urs*), a form of gratitude for the marriage as well as an announcement to the public that the bride and groom have legally become wife and husband. A *kiai* stated:[31]

> "Finally, *tampah wirang*... If this party is done it means the marriage is perfect, and all the procedures of *merariq* have been fulfilled. They have officially become husband and wife. Their relationship is now legal according to custom, religion, and the state. Adherence to these three rules is a principle for us, to be obeyed by all *Wetu Telu* people here in Bayan."

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[28] JB and MHO, Interview, March 2022.
[29] RNM, Interview, April 2022.
[30] Interview with informants, March-April 2022.
[31] RNM, Interview.

Dialectical Forms Beyond Merariq

There are various forms of dialectics between Islam and local culture reflected in the *merariq* tradition of *Wetu Telu* Muslims. These forms are seen mainly in five aspects of its implementation. *First*, the ritual implementation of the *ngawinang* or *'aqd al-nikāḥ*. Among all the stages of the *merariq* tradition, the *ngawinang* stage reflects the most noticeable form of dialectic. In this case, the nuances of Islamic procedures are more dominant, starting with the reading of the marriage sermon (*khuṭbah al-nikāḥ*) followed by *al-ījāb wa al-qabūl* (consent and acceptance in marriage). The sermon is usually read in Arabic, while the *ījāb wa qabūl* use the Javanese-Sasaknese, a typical Bayan language.[32]

Second, the use of certain symbols or media as well as symbolic expressions in all stages, such as the use of *beleq* drums during the *nyongkolan* procession which is interpreted as a medium for announcing the existence of a marriage (*i'lān al-nikāḥ*), the *bedak keramas* ritual which combines traditional *mantra*s (spell, a form of words used as a magical incantation) and prayers to God as well as glorification of ancestral spirits, the submission of *ajikrama* as an expression of devotion and gratitude to the bride's parents and the community, and etc.[33] That use of symbols not only confirms the dialectic of Islam and local culture but also reflects the unity in an equal relationship symbolized by the important role of religious and traditional leaders at every stage; a *pemangku* said:[34]

> "*Adat* (custom) is the world, religion is the hereafter. Both are important and must be practiced together. If we want to be happy in the afterlife, then practice the religion. If we want to be happy in the world, then enliven the *adat*. If we want to be happy in the world and the afterlife, practice both."

Third, the approval of traditional leaders or customary consultation. In the *merariq*, a marriage decision is not only based on Islamic values such as the consent of the guardian (*walī nikāḥ*) and the

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[32] RNM and MHO, Interview, April 2022.
[33] Based on observations in February and May 2022.
[34] MHO, Interview, April 2024.

agreement of both parties but also considers aspects of local culture such as the approval of traditional leaders. The customary fines and the handing over of part of the *ajikrama* to the customary community confirm that the marriage of a community member is a celebration of the happiness of all community members.[35]

Fourth, the obligation of dowry (*al-mahr*) and *ajikrama* from the groom to the bride. The obligation of dowry reflects Islamic teachings on *'aqd al-nikāḥ*, while the giving of *ajikrama* is a customary obligation that the groom's family must give to the bride's family. If the dowry is specific to the bride, the *ajikrama* is for the bride's family and the customary community. Fulfillment of both validates the marriage, both religiously and customarily.[36]

Fifth, the blessing of the bride and groom with *mantra*s and prayers. In the *merariq*, the process of blessing with prayers and *mantra*s is particularly visible during the events of *bedudus*, *tobat kakas*, and *bedak keramas*. *Mantra*s are recited by an *inaq belian*, while prayers are recited by *kiai*.[37] The process aims to ask God and the ancestors for blessings for the bride and groom's happiness. This blessing process reflects that religion and custom are lived as a living tradition in *Wetu Telu* traditions.

Through these various forms of dialectics, the *merariq* reflects a complex interaction between Islamic teachings and local culture. Based on observations, cultural elements appear to be much stronger in the *Wetu Telu's* wedding tradition than in the orthodox Sasak Muslims'. The uniqueness also confirms the fact that not only Islam culturally enriches the *Wetu Telu* teachings, but also Hinduism brought by the Kingdom Karangasem Bali during its period of control on Lombok Island.[38] Several stages of the *merariq* such as *bedak keramas* are rituals and stages of marriage among Balinese Hindus, while Islamic teachings appear, for instance, in fulfilling the conditions and pillars of marriage such as the *ījāb wa qabūl* process.

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[35] RGD, Interview, May 2024.

[36] MHO, Interview, April 2024.

[37] Observations, February and May 2022.

[38] Hans Hägerdal, *Hindu Rulers, Muslim Subjects: Lombok and Bali in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Bangkok: White Lotus Press, 2001).

Merariq in the *'Urf* Perspective

From the *'Urf* perspective, the *merariq* is valid to be called part of the Islamic traditions because its rules (*qā'idah*) emphasize the possibility and permissibility of local traditions being taken into consideration in deriving Islamic law (*istinbāṭ al-aḥkām*), for example, *al-'ādah muḥakkamah* (traditions can be taken into consideration in determining the law) and *al-thābit bi al-'urf kā al-thābit bin al-naṣṣ mā lam yukhālif shar'an* (a ruling based on tradition is the same as a ruling based on *Shara'*).[39] These rules are epistemological reasons for the use of tradition as a reference in deriving judgments so that the Islamic legal products are friendly to local traditions.

The *'Urf* is based on Qs. al-A'rāf (7): 199 says, "Be forgiving and order people to do what is *ma'rūf*, and turn away from ignorant people." *Al-ma'rūf* is something that is considered good by society so it is always practiced. It is *al-'urf* (custom),[40] something that is considered good by society and recognized by *shara'* in line with a ḥadīth attributed to 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ud that something that is considered good by Muslims is also seen as good by Allāh.[41] Based on the ḥadīth, *merariq* is something that is considered rationally good by the *Wetu Telu* Muslims and is consciously practiced by them continuously and then institutionalized into customs. Thus, it is legally recognized by Islamic Law, although it has differences from the wedding tradition of mainstream Muslims. The point is that the traditions accommodated by Islam are good traditions that are in line with the Shariah.[42] In this context, the *merariq* is a form of good local tradition (*'ādah ṣāliḥah*) because all of its stages are generally not contrary to the Shariah.[43]

Ibn Qayyim, a medieval Islamic jurist (*faqīh*), paid great attention to local traditions in establishing Islamic legal provisions. He reminded that if someone asks for a *fatwa* (legal opinion), the person must be asked about the traditions that apply in his region and society. Meanwhile, people who are fixated on the meaning of texts that are

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[39] 'Abd al-Wahhāb Khalāf, *'Ilm Uṣūl Al-Fiqh* (Cairo: Dār al-Ḥadīth, 2003), 99.

[40] Abū al-Fayd Muḥammad bin Yāsin bin Isā Al-Fādānī, *Al-Fawā'id Al-Janiyyah* (n.p: al-Bidāyah, n.d.), 225.

[41] Jalāl al-Dīn Al-Suyūṭī, *Al-Ashbāh Wa Al-Naẓā'ir* (Bairut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 2010), 141–42.

[42] Ṣubḥī Maḥmaṣānī, *Falsafat Al-Tashrī' Fī Al-Islām* (Beirut: Maktabah al-Kashshāf, 1946), 212.

[43] JB, Interview, January 2024.

contrary to customs, time, place, and human affairs are heretical and misleading.[44] In fact, changes in Islamic law depend on changes in time, place, customs, and human characteristics.[45] In the case of *Wetu Telu*, the *merariq* that differs from the marriage tradition among mainstream Muslims is a logical consequence of the difference between their cultural context and that of other Muslims.

Cultural behavior cannot be separated from Islamic legal theory relating to custom and changes in Islamic law.[46] Within that context, the *Wetu Telu's* cultural behavior has been institutionalized as a custom such as that of *merariq*. In the *merariq*, they adhere to general provisions of Islamic law regarding marriage. It is just that in the process, they have rules which come from traditional agreements. In other words, the *merariq* tradition can be recognized as a tradition (*'urf*) and becomes a consideration for determining Islamic law on marriage. It is a part of the Islamic tradition, even though there are a number of differences with the wedding practices of orthodox Muslims. This is in line with the meaning of *'urf*; it is something that people are used to doing and, in its development, it has become a popular habit among them.[47]

With these rules, of course, not all habits or traditions can be categorized as the *'Urf*. Only traditions that have become social provisions (*al-istiqrār*), continuation (*al-istimrār*) from the previous generation, and do not deviate from rational propriety can be accepted as *al-'urf al-ṣaḥīḥ*.[48] These three conditions are generally fulfilled in the

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[44] Ibn Qayyim Al-Jawziyyah, *I'lām Al-Muwaqqi'īn 'an Rabb Al-Ālāmīn* (Bairut: Dār Iḥyā al-Turāth al-'Arabiy, 1993), 90–100.

[45] Al-Jawziyyah, *I'lām Al-Muwaqqi'īn 'an Rabb Al-Ālāmīn*.

[46] 'Abd al-Karīm Zaydān, *Al-Madkhal Li Dirāsat Al-Sharī'ah Al-Islāmiyyah* (Baghdad: Maktabah al-Quds, 1982), 107.

[47] Abd al-Wahhāb Khalāf, *Maṣādir Al-Tashrī' Al-Islāmī Fīmā Lā Naṣṣ Fīh* (Kuwait: Dār al-Qalam, 1993), 828; Wahbah Al-Zuḥaylī, *Uṣūl Al-Fiqh Al-Islāmī* (Baghdad: Dār al-Fikr, n.d.), 145; Zainuddin, Jusalim Sammak, and Salle, "Akkattere: Syncretism of Patuntung Beliefs and Sharia on Pilgrimage of the Ammatoa Kajang Community," *AHKAM: Jurnal Ilmu Syariah* 23, no. 2 (2023): 473–96, https://doi.org/10.15408/ajis.v23i2.30675; Fatahuddin Aziz Siregar et al., "Merantau in the Ethnic Tradition of Minangkabau: Local Custom without Sharia Basis?," *Samarah* 6, no. 1 (2022): 115–38, https://doi.org/10.22373/sjhk.v6i1.9954.

[48] Aḥmad Fahmī Abū Sunnah, *Al-'Urf Wa Al-'Ādah Fī Ra'y Al-Fuqahā'* (Cairo: Al-Azhar, 1947), 8; Nor Hasan et al., "Tradition, Social Values, and Fiqh of Civilization: Examining the Nyadran Ritual in Nganjuk, East Java, Indonesia," *Samarah* 7, no. 3 (2023): 1778–1802, https://doi.org/10.22373/sjhk.v7i3.20578; Sulfan Wandi Sulfan Wandi, "Eksistensi 'Urf dan Adat Kebiasaan Sebagai Dalil Fiqh," *SAMARAH: Jurnal*

merariq tradition, both in practice and meaning; it confirms that Islam is present in every dimension of the locality without destroying the local traditions and vice versa. As long as local traditions do not conflict diametrically with the Islamic basic principles and are still in harmony with theological and ethical principles, they can be accepted as part of the Islamic expressions.

For example, the issue of the clothes worn by women in the wedding ceremony. The clothes are *kebaya* without head covering. Islamic law requires covering the *'awrah*, but the limits of women's *'awrah* are not explicitly specified in the *naṣ*. The *madhhab* (schools of law) scholars differ in their opinions about the limits of women's *'awrah*.[49] Their consideration in determining the limits of women's *'aurah* is *khawf al-fitnah* (concerns about the emergence of *fitnah*, danger, and evil).[50] With this consideration, the limits of women's *'awrah* can be determined by cultural values developing in society. The *kebayas* without head covering worn by women in the *merariq* procession are based on cultural values that do not categorize hair as an *'awrah* that must be covered and therefore there is no concern about *fitnah 'awrah* in that community.[51]

Another example is the *memulang* stage of the *merariq*. Islamic law prohibits men from seclusion (being alone) with women without a *maḥram* (a person who is forbidden to marry because of descent, breastfeeding, and marital relations). Likewise, a woman is prohibited from traveling without being accompanied by her *maḥram*.[52] This provision is intended to protect women and ensure that women are in comfortable and safe conditions. However, the *memulang* cannot be considered an act that is contrary to Islamic law because, in its procession, the man is not alone. He also involved his family and

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Hukum Keluarga dan Hukum Islam 2, no. 1 (2018): 181, https://doi.org/10.22373/sjhk.v2i1.3111; Moh Zahid, "Sharia and Local Wisdom in Indonesia: A Criticism of Jāhiliyyah Law Misinterpretation," *Ahkam: Jurnal Ilmu Syariah* 22, no. 2 (2022): 455–72, https://doi.org/10.15408/ajis.v22i2.25100.

[49] Wahbah Al-Zuḥaylī, *Al-Fiqh Al-Islāmī Wa Adillatuh* (Bairut: Dār al-Fikr, 1989), 583–93; Muwaffaq al-Dīn Abī Muḥammad Abd Allāh bin Aḥmad bin Muḥammad bin Qudāmah, *Al-Mughnī* (Riyadh: Dār Ālam al-Kutub, 1997), 326–28.

[50] Husein Muhammad, *Fiqh Perempuan: Refleksi Kiai Atas Tafsir Wacana Agama dan Gender.* (Yogyakarta: IRCiSod, 2019), 143–44.

[51] MHO, Interview, April 2024.

[52] Abū al-Ḥusayn Muslim bn. Al-Ḥajjāj, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* (Bandung: Shirkat al-Maʿārif li al-Thab' wa al-Nashr, n.d.), 563.

friends. Apart from that, the woman is taken away to the man's family's house, not somewhere unsafe for women.[53]

Next is *nyongkolan* procession in the *merariq* that reflects the preservation of local culture wrapped in religious teachings. Its specialty lies in the procession of sending off the bride and groom which is enlivened by the sound of the *gendang beleq*. This procession practices Islamic teaching which recommends *i'lān al-nikāḥ*.[54] The scholars of *fiqh (fuqahā')* stated that *i'lān al-nikāḥ* is recommended in Islamic law based on the Prophet's ḥadīth, "Announce the marriage and beat the tambourine."[55] In fact, the Mālikī *Madhhab* requires *i'lān al-nikāḥ*.[56]

In the '*Urf* perspective, the series of processions and ritual aspects of *merariq* are filled with symbols that actually strengthen the building of the tradition of Islamic marriage. For example, *bedak keramas* procession symbolizes cleansing the bodies and souls of the bride and groom from dirt, disease, and sins they have committed. During the procession, the ingredients used for bathing and shampooing the bride and groom's hair are recited mantras. The recitation of *mantra*s gives a signal of sacredness;[57] it is carried out so that the bride and groom are truly clean and ready to make *'aqd al-nikāḥ*.

From the '*Urf* perspective, *merariq* is a manifestation of a long dialectical process between Islam and local culture. This confirms the fact that a dialectical process between Islam and local culture is inevitable at once; it's a symbiotic process that mutually enriches each

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[53] RSH and LNR, Interview, May 2022.

[54] Muḥammad bin Aḥmad bin Muḥammad bin Rushd, *Bidāyat Al-Mujtahid Wa Nihāyat Al-Muqtaṣid* (Semarang: Maktabah Usaha Keluarga, n.d.), 13.

[55] Wahbah Al-Zuḥaylī, *Al-Fiqh Al-Islāmī Wa Adillatuh* (Bairut: Dār al-Fikr, 1989), 124; Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥusain bin Mas'ūd Al-Bagawī, *Sharḥ Al-Sunnah* (Bairut: Dār al-Fikr, 2005), 313.

[56] Mālik bin Anas, *Al-Mudawwanah Al-Kubrā* (Cairo: Dār al-Ḥadīth, 2005), 314; Rosdalina Bukido et al., "Harmonization of Customary and Islamic Law in the Gama Tradition of the Muslim Mongondow Community of North Sulawesi," *Ijtihad: Jurnal Wacana Hukum Islam dan Kemanusiaan* 22, no. 2 (2022): 239–54, https://doi.org/10.18326/IJTIHAD.V22I2.239-254; Arifki Budia Warman et al., "Strengthening Family Resilience Through Local Wisdom: Pulang Ka Bako Type of Marriage in Minangkabau," *Al-Istinbath: Jurnal Hukum Islam* 8, no. 1 (2023): 253–68, https://doi.org/10.29240/jhi.v8i1.6971.

[57] JB, Interview, January 2024.

other so that Islam is constructed in the multi-faceted model,[58] such as Malay Islam, Chinese Islam, Madurese Islam, Javanese Islam, Sasaks Islam, and *Wetu Telu* Islam.[59]

Those models of Islamic expression can be read appropriately with Talal Asad's anthropological theory. He theorized a variety of Islam as the result of a discursive tradition.[60] According to him, Islam always encourages Muslims to seek true religious models and goals in practicing Islamic teachings. In every different space and time, Muslims always try to legitimize their religious practices with the main authoritative references (al-Qur'ān and al-Ḥadīth).[61] These religious practices are the basis for the formation of discursive Islamic traditions so that the Islamic traditions in the world always display the heterogeneous Islams.[62]

Asad viewed tradition as something that is dynamic because it is always required to respond to contemporary issues. Thus, Islam as a discursive tradition is always able to adapt to contemporary demands without having to lose its authenticity and continuity with the past. This allows Islamic reasoning to always provide opportunities for negotiation between past Islamic practices as a reference and present or future demands as a projection.[63] With Asad's view, the *merariq* tradition is anthropologically valid to be called part of the Islamic traditions.

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[58] Eldar Barten, *In Muslim Diversity: Local Islam in Global Context* (Richmond: Curzon Press, 1999).

[59] Suprapto, *Dialektika Islam dan Budaya Nusantara: Dari Negosiasi, Adaptasi Hingga Komodifikasi* (Jakarta: Prenada Media Group, 2020); Suhaimi, Agustri Purwandi, and Akhmad Farid Mawardi Sufyan, "Binsabin dan Tongngebban as Madurese Local Wisdom: An Anthropology of Islamic Law Analyses," *Al-Ihkam: Jurnal Hukum dan Pranata Sosial* 16, no. 1 (2021): 161–79, https://doi.org/10.19105/Al-Ihkam.V16I1.3861; Zainuddin, Jusalim Sammak, and Salle, "Patuntung: The Encounter of Local Culture and Islamic Sharia in the Ammatoa Aajang Community," *Al-Ihkam: Jurnal Hukum dan Pranata Sosial* 18, no. 1 (2023): 177–99, https://doi.org/10.19105/al-lhkam.v18i1.8207.

[60] Saba Mahmood and Jean-michel Landry, "Anthropology of Islam Journal," *Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 5 (2020): 1–18, https://doi.org/10.1093/OBO/9780199766567-0175.

[61] Mahmood and Landry.

[62] Abdul Hamid El-Zein, "Beyond Ideology and Theology: The Search for the Anthropology of Islam," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 6, no. 227–254 (1977), http://www.jstor.org/stable/2949332.

[63] Talal Asad, "Anthropological Conceptions of Religion: Reflection on Geertz," *Man* 18, no. 12 (1983): 237–259, http://www.jstor.org/stable/2801433.

In short, the *Wetu Telu* Muslims have developed complex religious practices based on local cultures.[64] This indicates that Islam is actually not an inanimate object so it always has relevance to every local culture.[65] If Islam is treated as a final product of religiosity or an inanimate entity, many other Islamic models will not be tolerated. This essentialist view has ignored the fact that Islam and local cultures are often negotiating with each other to create something to be shared together.[66] On the contrary, Asad's view of Islam as a discursive tradition will be able to lead Muslims with different cultural backgrounds to find the "authenticity" of their respective Islamic expressions. Through a mutually interactive relationship, local culture will provide more wisdom to Islam and vice versa.

Conclusion

Merariq is one of Lombok's Sasak community wedding traditions but the only socio-cultural institution of marriage customs among the other two. It makes very much sense, therefore, to find it wrapped by traditional naming, values, and physical procession. Furthermore, it reflects a number of dialectical forms between Islamic teachings and local culture although apparently, it seems to dominantly represent the cultural aspects rather than the religious ones, making it a target of bad stigma or accusation as deviant Islam or such. In fact, as this research reveals, there are at least five aspects of dialectical forms beyond the practice of *merariq*. This research furthermore found some aspects of *merariq* qualified to requirements of *al-'urf al-ṣaḥīḥ* so that it could be legitimately considered as a part of

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[64] Maimun, "Islam Nusantara in Islamic Law Epistemology Perspective," *Al-Ihkam: Jurnal Hukum & Pranata Sosial* 11, no. 2 (2017): 392, https://doi.org/10.19105/al-ihkam.v11i2.779.

[65] Abdurrohman Kasdi, "Islamic Dialectics and Culture in Establishing Islam Nusantara Paradigm: Variety Model of Islam Nusantara for Indonesia," *Addin* 12, no. 2 (2018): 299, https://doi.org/10.21043/addin.v12i2.4537.

[66] Najib Kailani, *Articulations of Islam and Muslim Subjectivity: Fundamental Debates in the Anthropology of Islam* (Taiwan: Centre for Multicultural Studies, 2020); Hamda Sulfinadia et al., "Implementation of Aqiqah in the Bulan Maulid in Nagari Padang Laweh West Sumatra Perspective'Urf," *Al-Istinbath: Jurnal Hukum Islam* 8, no. 2 (2023): 465–84, https://doi.org/10.29240/jhi.v8i2.6800; Nofiardi, "The 'Urf Perspective of Maanta Bareh Pasaran: Reinforcing the Kinship System through a Local Wisdom in Nagari Balingka," *Al-Istinbath: Jurnal Hukum Islam* 7, no. 1 (2022): 75–92, https://doi.org/10.29240/jhi.v7i1.4132; Zahid, "Sharia and Local Wisdom in Indonesia: A Criticism of Jāhiliyyah Law Misinterpretation."

Islamic law practice apart from traditional or Hindus nuance deemed to be found within. However, a few parts of *merariq* slightly imply deviation or differences with mainstream or orthodox Islamic practice that are out of this current research focus, namely about taking away the future bride from her family right before the wedding. Those aspects are prone to further misleading information or misunderstanding and it requires more focused research to redefine the scope and stages of *merariq*, particularly considering its sustainability until today in one hand and controversial assumptions around it.

Acknowledgments

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