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

**Fawaizul Umam**  
*Universitas Islam Negeri Kawi Haji Achmad Siddiq, Jember, Indonesia*  
email: fawaiz@uinkhas.ac.id

**Mohammad Ali Al Humaidy**  
*Institut Agama Islam Negeri Madura, Pamekasan, Indonesia*  
email: malhum@iainmadura.ac.id

**Moh. Asyiq Amrulloh**  
*Universitas Islam Negeri Mataram, Mataram, Indonesia*  
email: mohasyiq71@uinmataram.ac.id

Article history: Received: October 06, 2023, Accepted: October 11, 2023, Published: June 15, 2024

**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 ceremonies.
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

---

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 Suprapto9 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 guru10 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

---

trilogy, 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. 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),

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. The systems, patterns, and ethos of culture have influenced symbols, patterns, and content of religiosity and vice versa. 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. 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:

“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

---

18 RSH, Interview, May 2022.
20 RSH, Interview, May 2022.
Dialectics Between Islam and Local Culture in Wetu Telu Lombok Muslims’

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.

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

---

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,

---

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). 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. 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.

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 (hamuktiketresnan). 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

---

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-nikāḥ process. 29

The entire series of merariq traditions culminates with the ngawinang ceremony (‘aqd al-nikāḥ). 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; walimat 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.”

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-nikāh. 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 (khutbah al-nikāh) followed by al-ijāb wa al-qabūl (consent and acceptance in marriage). The sermon is usually read in Arabic, while the ijab wa qabul 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'lan al-nikāh), the bedak keramas ritual which combines traditional mantras (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 nikāh) and the

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.\footnote{RGD, Interview, May 2024.}

*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. Fulfilment of both validates the marriage, both religiously and customarily.\footnote{MHO, Interview, April 2024.}

*Fifth*, the blessing of the bride and groom with *mantras* and prayers. In the *merariq*, the process of blessing with prayers and *mantras* is particularly visible during the events of *bedudus*, *tobat kakas*, and *bedak keramas*. *Mantras* are recited by an *inaq belian*, while prayers are recited by *kiai*.\footnote{Observations, February and May 2022.} 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.\footnote{Hans Hägerdal, *Hindu Rulers, Muslim Subjects: Lombok and Bali in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Bangkok: White Lotus Press, 2001).} 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.

---

\footnote{RGD, Interview, May 2024.} \footnote{MHO, Interview, April 2024.} \footnote{Observations, February and May 2022.} \footnote{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 muḥakkānah (traditions can be taken into consideration in determining the law) and al-thābit bi al-‘urf kā al-thābit bin al-naṣṣ mā lam yūkhālif shar’ān (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 hadith 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 hadith, 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

41 Jalāl al-Dīn Al-Suyūṭī, Al-Ashbāh Wa Al-Naḡāʿir (Bairut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, 2010), 141–42.
42 Şuḫī 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.\textsuperscript{44} In fact, changes in Islamic law depend on changes in time, place, customs, and human characteristics.\textsuperscript{45} In the case of \textit{Wetu Telu}, the \textit{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.\textsuperscript{46} Within that context, the \textit{Wetu Telu’s} cultural behavior has been institutionalized as a custom such as that of \textit{merariq}. In the \textit{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 \textit{merariq} tradition can be recognized as a tradition (‘urf) and becomes a consideration for determining Islamic law on marriage. 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.\textsuperscript{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-istiqrā’), continuation (al-istimrār) from the previous generation, and do not deviate from rational propriety can be accepted as al-‘urf al-ṣaḥīh.\textsuperscript{48} These three conditions are generally fulfilled in the

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{44} Ibn Qayyim Al-Jawziyyah, \textit{I’lām Al-Muwaaqqi’in ‘an Rabb Al-Ālāmīn} (Bairut: Dār Iḥyā al-Turāth al-‘Arabiyy, 1993), 90–100.
\item \textsuperscript{45} Al-Jawziyyah, \textit{I’lām Al-Muwaaqqi’in ‘an Rabb Al-Ālāmīn}.
\item \textsuperscript{46} ‘Abd al-Karīm Zaydān, \textit{Al-Madkhal Li Dirāsat Al-Sharī‘ah Al-Islāmiyyah} (Baghdad: Maktabah al-Quds, 1982), 107.
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 mahram (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 mahram.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

50 Husein Muhammad, Fiqh Perempuan: Refleksi Kiai Atas Tafsir Wacana Agama dan Gender. (Yogyakarta: IRCiSod, 2019), 143–44.
51 MHO, Interview, April 2024.
friends. Apart from that, the woman is taken away to the man’s family’s house, not somewhere unsafe for women.\textsuperscript{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 \textit{i’lān al-nikāḥ}.\textsuperscript{54} The scholars of fiqh (fuqahā’) stated that \textit{i’lān al-nikāḥ} is recommended in Islamic law based on the Prophet’s ḥadīth, “Announce the marriage and beat the tambourine.”\textsuperscript{55} In fact, the Mālikī Madhhab requires \textit{i’lān al-nikāḥ}.\textsuperscript{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 mantras gives a signal of sacredness;\textsuperscript{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

\textsuperscript{53} RSH and LNR, Interview, May 2022.

\textsuperscript{54} Muhammad bin Aḥmad bin Muḥammad bin Rushd, \textit{Bidāyat Al-Mujtahid Wa Nihāyat Al-Muqaṣsid} (Semarang: Maktabah Usaha Keluarga, n.d.), 13.

\textsuperscript{55} Wahbah Al-Zuḥaylī, \textit{Al-Fiqh Al-Islāmi Wa Adillatuh} (Bairut: Dār al-Fikr, 1989), 124; Abū Muhammad al-Ḥusain bin Mas’ūd Al-Bagawī, \textit{Sharḥ Al-Sunnah} (Bairut: Dār al-Fikr, 2005), 313.


\textsuperscript{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’an and al-Hadith).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.

61 Mahmood and Landry.
In short, the Wetu Telu Muslims have developed complex religious practices based on local cultures. This indicates that Islam is actually not an inanimate object so it always has relevance to every local culture. 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. 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

---


Islamic law practice apart from traditional or Hindu 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**
We would like to express our gratitude to the key informants of Wetu Telu Muslims. We are very grateful to Siti Nurjanah for the copy editing and also our gratitude to Bisri Affandi for his insightful input has significantly improved this paper.

**Bibliography**


Hägerdal, Hans. *Hindu Rulers, Muslim Subjects: Lombok and Bali in the*
Dialectics Between Islam and Local Culture in Wetu Telu Lombok Muslims’


Suprapto. *Dialektika Islam Dan Budaya Nusantara: Dari Negosiasi,*