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Together In Lesema: Living Islamic Law among Customary Dani Muslims Polygamy Practice in Papua

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Abstract:

The practice of polygamy (*nage apik*) within the Dani Muslim Community in Walesi Village of Jayawijaya Papua exhibits distinctive and unique characteristics. This article aims to reveal the practice among the Dani Muslims who apparently place their wives in the same house (called *lesema*). A qualitative approach using Spreadley's ethnographic method serves as the primary data collection tool through observation and in-depth interviews with the informants. A review of relevant literature is conducted to contextualize the article

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within the existing literature. The data are analyzed interpretively by considering the ethical and emic principles. This article finds that *first*, polygamy for Muslim Dani is not only a way for continuing the descendants but also for asserting authority over the territory and taking responsibility for maintaining the community's continuity. *Second*, living harmoniously in *lesema* is a practice aimed at preserving communal unity without barriers while also serving as a space for transferring knowledge on how to be a Dani woman. *Third*, polygamy within the Muslim Dani is seen as an extension of their cultural practices, accepted as a necessity and a solution to social issues within the community. The practice furthermore provides a new perspective on understanding the characteristics of Indonesian society regarding the role of women in households. It also illustrates how Islamic law intertwines with local traditions based on the history, level of understanding, natural characteristics, and lifestyle of its community.

Keywords:

Dani Muslim; *Lesema*; *Nage Apik*; Polygamy; Islamic law

Introduction

Polygamy practice among the Dani Muslim community in Baliem Valley, Papua, asserts that marriage is not only interpreted as a bond unification of husband and wife but also as a proof of male authority and power. This practice is carried out evenly by tribal chiefs and the community in general with the local term called *nage apik* (having multiple wives). A man with many wives is seen as an influential person (*ap kain*) in his tribal community due to his ability to prove power to create a harmonious life. The practice of *nage apik* which in some aspects is similar to polygamy, continues to emerge and is practiced by the Dani Muslim Community with preserved uniqueness and certain adaptations regarding the number of wives, marriage procedures, and dowries provided.

The Dani tribe is one of seven large sub-ethnic tribes that inhabit in Baliem Valley, Papuan Central Mountains. The tribes are Lani, Nduga, Mek, Walak, Yali, and Hubula, which are more widely

known in the ethnographic records as the Dani people.¹ The Dani Muslim community in Baliem Valley amounted to 1,114 people² was formed naturally from the meeting of the Dani tribe as local inhabitants with the Muslim immigrants as the members of West Irian Liberation Pioneer (PPIB) in the 1970s. It can be said that the spread of Islam in the Dani community was slow until one of the Dani prominent persons, Aipon Asso, declared himself to convert to Islam in 1973, which was followed by most of his clan members. The growth in the number of communities tends to be stagnant, accompanied by slow internalization of formal Islamic values and norms.

In daily life, the religious practices and expressions of the Dani Muslim community are integrated with tradition.³ Even though they have converted to Islam, they still preserve the old traditions and culture along with the worship rituals and other religious social practices.⁴ Dani tribe continues to maintain and respect the customs inherited from their ancestors,⁵ even though in other parts, it is considered a deviation from the mainstream of Islamic groups, such as the tradition of finger cutting as a symbol of mourning, cohabiting with pigs inside *lesema* (a special house for the Dani women), and using them as dowry in marriages. These practices put the Dani people as 'another Islam' different from the majority.⁶ They continue to struggle to maintain their identity as Dani people on the one hand but on the other, they also have to survive as Muslims. This explanation then becomes the context of how the practice of Dani-

¹Marde Christian Stenly Mawikere, "Konsep Hidup Kekal Menurut Pandangan Dunia Etnis Baliem, Papua Sebagai Potensi dan Krisis bagi Kontekstualisasi Injil," *Evangelikal: Jurnal Teologi Injili dan Pembinaan Warga Jemaat*, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.46445/ejti.v5i1.333>.

²"Data Badan Pusat Statistik Papua Tahun 2022," n.d.

³ Ade Yamin, et al, *Islam Sumber Kebanggaan: Dialektika Agama, Budaya dan Politik Komunitas Dani Papua* (Yogyakarta: LKiS, 2020).

⁴ Saberria, et al, *Komunitas Islam di Lembah Baliem Kabupaten Jaya Wijaya* (Jakarta: Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, 2015); Umar Yelepele and Moh. Hefni, "Perkawinan Adat Muslim Suku Dani di Papua," *AL-IHKAM: Jurnal Hukum & Pranata Sosial*, 2013, <https://doi.org/10.19105/al-lhkam.v7i1.317>.

⁵ Adnan Yelipele, *Hukum Islam dan Adat di Papua: Kajian Mahar Babi Sebagai Proses Transisi Perkawinan Adat Muslim Suku Dani*, MS Thesis, Sekolah Pascasarjana UIN Syarif Hidayatullah, 2015.

⁶ Ade Yamin, *Perjuangan Komunitas Dani di Lembah Baliem* (Yogyakarta: Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta, 2019).

style polygamous marriages remains a tradition and is preserved in the Dani Muslim community.

The uniqueness of polygamous practice among the Dani Muslim community lies in their adherence to the maximum limit on the number of wives as prescribed by Islamic law and the cohabitation of multiple wives within a single *lesema* (a special house for the Dani women) in a housing complex called *silimo*. *Silimo* and its equipment is illustrated in Figure 1 (a), while *lesema* with its parts is illustrated in Figure 1 (b).

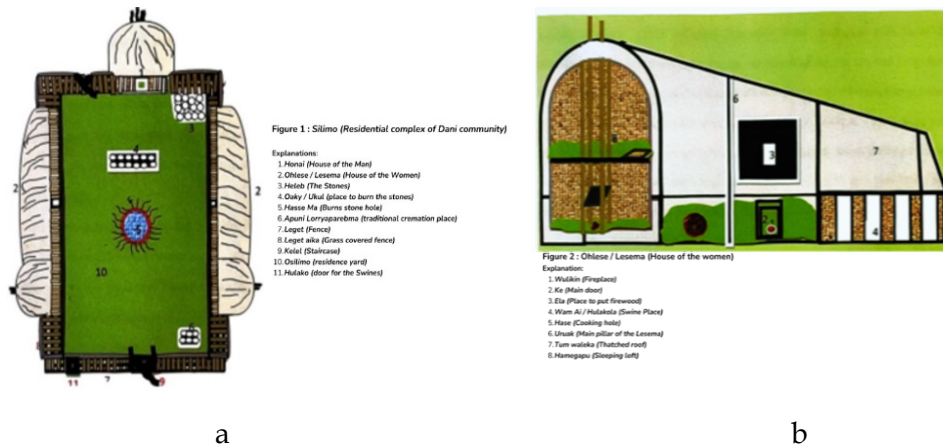


Figure 1. *Silimo* and *Lesema* in Dani Muslim housing complex

Figure 1 shows that *silimo* is a general residential unit of Dani people that functions as a residence, a place for gathering and holding open activities.⁷ A complete *silimo* consists of a *honai* (the man's house), *ohlese/lesema* (the women's house), *oaky/ukul* (the stone burning place), *apuni lonyapurebma* (the cremation site), *haseh ma / hate ma* (the stone burning hole), *leget* (the fence between the residence and the fence surrounding the *silimo*), *leget aika* (the grass covering the fence), *kelel* (the stairs), and *hulako* (a place for pigs to enter and leave). Meanwhile, *lesema* consists of *wulikin* (a fireplace), *ke* (the doors), *ela* (a place for firewood), *wam ai / hulakola* (a pigpen), *hase / hate* (the cooking hole), *uruak* (the middle pillar supporting the *lesema*), *tum*

⁷ Agus A. Alua, *Nilai-Nilai Hidup Masyarakat Hubula di Lembah Baliem Papua* (Abepura: Biro Penelitian STFT Fajar Timur, 2003), 40-42.

waleka (the thatched roof), *henagapu* (the loft/women's bedroom).⁸ Other than the principle of practicality, the unification of wives' houses also contains a number of values and norms that must be adhered to in order to ensure the sustainability of the community. The pattern of life and relationship between men and women in this typical polygamous marriage is very important to examine more deeply, especially in the Dani community that has declared themselves Muslim.

Other than that, polygamous practices of the Dani Muslim align with the textual interpretation of surah *an-Nisā'* (4): 3, which permits polygamy within the confines of a maximum of four wives. This signifies a significant shift considering that previously, the number of limits was not known. Notably, the intriguing aspect is manifested in the use of pigs as dowry,⁹ which is considered as *najis* (ritually unclean) and cohabitation of all wives within the *lesema*, alongside other female family members and the pigs owned by the husband.¹⁰ The normative concept of dowry typically involves the husband presenting items or goods with the economic value of the wife,¹¹ is uniquely represented by the Dani tribe through the bestowal of pigs, signifying ownership with comprehensive economic values.¹²

Polygamy has been explained by many researchers in four tendencies as follows. *First*, polygamy in the religious interpretation perspective and its regulation. Polygamy is connected to the concept of justice that refers to the *tafsīr* (interpretation) of *al-Qur'ān* Surah *an-Nisā'* (4): 3 and 129.¹³ *Second*, polygamy in the norms of regulations

⁸ Ade Yamin, "Menjadi Muslim Tetap Dani-Potret Kehidupan Orang Dani Islam di Kampung Waleka Papua," Doctoral Dissertation, Universitas Gadjah Mada, 2011, 36.

⁹ Yelipele, "Hukum Islam dan Adat di Papua: Kajian Mahar Babi Sebagai Proses Transisi Perkawinan Adat Muslim Suku Dani."

¹⁰ Yamin, "Islam Sumber Kebanggaan; Dialektika Agama, Budaya dan Politik Komunitas Dani Papua."

¹¹ Muhammad Ridwan, "Kedudukan Mahar dalam Perkawinan," *Jurnal Perspektif*, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.53746/perspektif.v13i1.9>; Firman Surya Putra, "Urgensi dan Kedudukan Shodaq (Mahar) dalam Pernikahan," *Jurnal An-Nahl*, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.54576/annahl.v8i2.33>; Diana Khotibi, "Kritik Al-Qur'an terhadap Tradisi Mahar: Analisis Penafsiran QS. Al-Nisa' Ayat 4," *KACA (Karunia Cahaya Allah): Jurnal Dialogis Ilmu Ushuluddin*, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.36781/kaca.v13i1.348>.

¹² Yelepele and Hefni, "Perkawinan Adat Muslim Suku Dani di Papua."

¹³ Alfita Trisnawati Adam, "Pembacaan *Mubādalāh* terhadap Penafsiran Hamka tentang Poligami," *Citra Ilmu*, 2019; Saifuddin Zuhri Qudsy and Mamat S. Burhanuddin, "Penggunaan Hadis-Hadis Poligami dalam Tafsir Ibnu Katsir," *Jurnal*

relating to the conditions of allowing, limiting, to prohibiting.¹⁴ *Third*, the impact of the practice of polygamy in the context of protecting women and children in the society.¹⁵ And *fourth*, polygamy as a cultural practice¹⁶ which shows the dynamics and diversity of

Sipakalebbi, 2014, <https://doi.org/10.14421/musawa.v15i2.1304>; Siti Asiyah, et al., "Konsep Poligami dalam Al-Qur'an: Studi Tafsir Al-Misbah Karya M. Quraish Shihab," *Fikri: Jurnal Kajian Agama, Sosial dan Budaya*, 2019, <https://doi.org/10.25217/jf.v4i1.443>; Evi Muzaiyidah Bukhori, "Poligami dalam Metode Tafsir Al-Qur'an Muhammad Shahrur," *An-Nisa': Journal of Gender Studies*, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.35719/annisa.v14i1.53>; Yufni Faisol, "Konsep Adil dalam Poligami: Telaah Pemikiran Mushthofa Al-'Adawī dalam Tafsīr Al-Tashīl Lita'wīl At-Tanzīl," *International Journal Ihya' 'Ulum Al-Din*, 2016, <https://doi.org/10.21580/ihya.17.1.1730>; Abd. Moqsih, "Tafsir atas Poligami dalam Al-Qur'an," *KARSA: Jurnal Sosial dan Budaya Keislaman*, 2015, <https://doi.org/10.19105/karsa.v23i1.613>.

¹⁴ Khoirudin Nasution, *Status Wanita di Asia Tenggara: Studi terhadap Perundang-Undangan Perkawinan Muslim Kontemporer di Indonesia dan Malaysia* (Jakarta: INIS, 2002); Muhammad Zaki, "Dinamika Introduksi Sanksi Poligami dalam Hukum Negara Muslim Modern," *Al-Risalah: Forum Kajian Hukum dan Sosial Kemasyarakatan*, 2018, <https://doi.org/10.30631/al-risalah.v14i02.453>; Fahimul Fuad, "Historisitas dan Tujuan Poligami: Perspektif Indonesia dan Negara Muslim Modern," *Al-Syakhsyiyah: Journal of Law & Family Studies*, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.21154/syakhsyiyah.v2i1.2161>; Ismail Marzuki, "Politik Hukum Poligami (Studi terhadap Peraturan Perundang-Undangan di Negara-Negara Muslim)," *Al-Manahij: Jurnal Kajian Hukum Islam*, 2019, <https://doi.org/10.24090/mnh.v13i1.1799>.

¹⁵ Ade Darmawijaya, "Dampak Poligami Siri terhadap Kehidupan Keluarga di Desa Cigugur Girang Bandung Barat," *Asy-Syari'ah*, 2019, <https://doi.org/10.15575/as.v21i2.5447>; Hijrah Lahaling and Kindom Makkulawuzar, "Dampak Pelaksanaan Perkawinan Poligami terhadap Perempuan dan Anak," *Al-Mujtahid: Journal of Islamic Family Law*, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.30984/jifl.v1i2.1742>; Anwar Hafidzi and Eka Hayatunnisa, "Kriteria Poligami serta Dampaknya Melalui Pendekatan *Al-Lā Tuqṣīṭū Fī Al-Yatamā* dalam Kitab Fikih Islam *Wa 'Adīlatuhu*," *Syariah: Jurnal Hukum dan Pemikiran*, 2018, <https://doi.org/10.18592/sy.v17i1.1967>; Noer Azizah, "Poligami Sirri dan Dampaknya terhadap Mental Istri dan Anak Persepektif Sigmund Freud," *Al-Mujtahid: Journal of Islamic Family Law*, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.18860/egalita.v15i1.10177>.

¹⁶ Rahmat Fadillah, "Pertentangan Hukum Adat dengan Hukum Islam dalam Kasus Waris Janda Poligami 'Urang' Banjar," *Journal of Islamic and Law Studies*, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.18592/jils.v5i1.4718>; I Wayan Endra Irawan, "Sistem Karang Memadu Sebagai Bentuk Sanksi Adat terhadap Tindak Poligami di Desa Adat Penglipuran Kecamatan Bangli Kabupaten Bangli," *Jurnal Pendidikan Kewarganegaraan Undiksha*, 2013; Dian Eka Mayasari Sri Wahyuni and Wahab, "Perkawinan Poligami di Desa Serenang Kecamatan Pujut Kabupaten Lombok Tengah," *Historis: Jurnal*

polygamous practices. This article provides new data about the pattern of polygamy in Indonesia that describes a practice of having many wives in the Dani community, which is similar to the practice of polygamy, but with typical contexts and characteristics as well as different meanings and implications, including that of Islamic law.

This article is based on an argument that the practice of living with many wives who are placed at one *lesema* together continues to be carried out among the Dani Papua men because it is driven by three things. *First* is the life history of the Dani community which is full of conflict and violence which requires the community members to live in groups in a *silimo*. Each wife who lives in the *lesema* plays different roles in daily activities as a form of togetherness without partitions or hierarchy aiming to unravel as well as lighten the workload that becomes women's responsibility. *Second*, the philosophy of *wen*, (hard work), *wam* (having lots of pigs), and *wene* (leadership or ability to argue or beat people in debates) continue to be used as a measuring tool to determine social status and leadership among the community. This philosophy is inherited in a structured way in the form of teachings on the Dani people's values of life. *Thirdly*, a permissive attitude towards behavior that puts women as subordinate in all respects is a result of the structural and cultural hegemony that has lasted for a long time. These three arguments strongly highlight the intersection of Islamic law with local customs within the *nage apik* tradition of the Dani Muslim community.

Nage apik traditions show that Islamic law engages in dialogue and adapts to local traditions in Dani, Papua. The Dani community integrates its Islamic practices with deeply rooted local traditions which serve as the community's philosophy and communal lifestyle. Scholarly investigations in the past have further demonstrated the nuanced and varied dynamics characterizing the interrelation between Islamic law and customary law within this specific cultural context. This interpretation provides a perspective that the practice of *nage apik* within the Dani Muslim community is an extension of the previous Dani tradition adapted to the norms of polygamy in Islam. The tradition itself emphasizes the defeat, oppression, and weakness

Kajian, Penelitian dan Pengembangan Pendidikan Sejarah, 2018, <https://doi.org/10.31764/historis.v2i1.197>.

of women's position within the social structure of the indigenous community that gains legitimacy from both cultural and structural authority.

This article aims at revealing a habit in the Dani Muslim community that applies a lifestyle of having many wives and all of them are placed in a *lesema*. It does not only narrate the practices and values contained in the lifestyle of having many wives but also attempts to see how this practice can fill the gap in understanding the practices of Islamic law in the indigenous community while keeping the local beliefs by explaining these three things: *first*, the practice of having many wives and living in harmony together in one *lesema*. The *second* aim is the reasons under the practice of having many wives and living harmoniously together in one *lesema* takes place. The *third* is the implications of having many wives in the context of Islamic law and local tradition. Those three things become the point of view to reveal and also narrate the peculiarity of life of the Dani community in Papua.

Method

Assoyelipele Village, Walesi District, Jayawijaya Regency, which is the locus of research, is the first Islamic center for the Dani Muslim community in Papua. It was followed by nine other Muslim villages in the Jayawijaya area. Not only of historical significance, but the village of Assoyelipele also provides a glimpse into ancient life that has managed to endure. Gradual transformation and modernization are taking place in the village of Assoyelipele as evidenced by the construction of roads connecting the villages, the houses, also the availability of electricity and internet networks. There are no magnificent buildings besides the Islamic boarding school that becomes the center of religious education at the eastern end of the village. In addition to the educational center, the mosque is also a marker of the presence of Islam as a community religion.

This article is a field note with Spradley's ethnographic work through direct observation at the research location.¹⁷ Observations involving residing at the research site were conducted for the duration of one month in the year 2022. Light and in-depth

¹⁷ James P Spradley, *Participant Observation* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1980).

conversations have been carried out directly with the informants consisting of tribal chiefs, religious leaders, and people who practice polygamy.¹⁸ Researchers have conducted interviews to obtain information about the history of polygamous marriage and tradition, the process of doing so, and the benefits as well as burdens that the wives receive from this tradition. This information is the main reason that the practice persists to this day. For collecting data, researchers lived with the community, witnessed the people's life habits, captured them in the form of pictures and videos and also small notes, then recorded the conversation using a mobile phone recorder application. The researchers prepared an interview guide as guidance to ask questions that require specific answers from the informants while still considering the ethical and emic principles so that a thick description could be obtained and in turn could make interpretations of the field findings.

The data collected, either in the form of conversation recordings resulting from the interviews or the films resulting from capturing people's activities, were displayed then reduced and analyzed using an interpretive model.¹⁹ Analysis of this ethnographic data relies on the researcher as the research instrument to interpret the data within the conceptual framework while adhering to ethical and emic principles. Categorization and reduction are vital components for sorting relevant data and establishing connections between different pieces of data and relevant theories. The technique of interpretation is related to the researcher's efforts to gain an understanding of the statements and behaviors of the informants as interpreted by the researcher by linking various indicators found in the field or by referencing and using relevant theories. The theoretical framework of social reality by Bourdieu, discrimination against women, and the intersection of Islamic law and customary law serve as the guiding framework for the analysis in this research.

Result and Discussion

Women, Marriage, and Polygamy in the Dani Muslim Community

¹⁸ James P Spradley, *The Ethnographic Interview* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1979).

¹⁹ Clifford Geertz, "Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture," *The cultural geography reader*, 2008, 42.

Marriage for Dani people is usually called *he yokal*. *He* means woman and *yokal* is clothes for married women.²⁰ The term *he yokal* is interpreted as a ceremony of changing *kemsili/sili* (youth or virgin clothes) to *yokal*. Meanwhile, others called this as a procession that changes the status of an unmarried girl (*homalugi/hilimikurugi*) to a married woman (*he/himi*).²¹ *Sili*, *apilil*, and *ewe yokal* are the three stages a Dani woman should go through to be a wife.²² In this procession, a Dani woman will be placed in the *lesema* to receive advice (*sili*), to be covered in lard (*apilil*), and a net/*noken* will be hung on her head (*ewe yokal/yokal isin*). Nowadays, *ewe yokal/yokal isin* is still practiced by the Dani Muslim community.

Despite being Muslims, Dani women do not break away from their customs. *Ewe yokal/yokal isin* serves as a representation of tradition that is still upheld by Muslim Dani women in their marital rituals. For them, carrying out a marriage procession means many things ranging from preserving customary orders, legitimizing submission to the manpower, living within limited space, to experiencing violence in relationships. Despite being the primary actors responsible for hard work within the family, managing reproductive matters, and fulfilling economic needs, Dani Muslim women's position reflects a total submission to male authority. The feeling of surrender to the male domination over her makes a Dani woman have to accept being labeled a disgrace when her husband died in an inter-clan war. Being a widow who is not wed by *ap kain* (the tribal chief) is deemed a disgrace to her family.

On the other hand, Dani women who live in the *lesema* build a sense of togetherness in a bond of mutual complementarity, care, and reinforcement among one another to strengthen their functions and roles in the clan. These efforts are transmitted in a series of advice to young Dani women who will become adults to be able to remain firm in maintaining the noble values of Dani women's life. The advice is not given during any special moment or specific time; rather, all guidance is provided casually and spontaneously. In fact, this advice is sometimes demonstrated through direct examples, such as roasting sweet potatoes, tending to livestock, cultivating the land, or even

²⁰ Yelepele and Hefni, "Perkawinan Adat Muslim Suku Dani di Papua."

²¹ Alua, *Nilai-Nilai Hidup Masyarakat Hubula di Lembah Baliem Papua*.

²² Yelepele, "Perkawinan Adat Muslim Suku Dani di Papua."

gathering firewood in the mountains. Advice on how to become influential in ethnic life helps Dani women preserve and stand up for what they have like what is clear in the following excerpt;

“We are usually advised to be able to give birth to good children, and then to be able to plant hopuru (sweet potato), to take care of pigs, to take care of the food in the lesema, and to become a good wife in the silimo. Then if there is a traditional occasion, we have to work to give an example to other women. It is because we are the tribal chief’s wives, but all (Dani) wives are similar, we all have the same culture”²³

The pieces of the interview above are a description of how a woman plays her role as the central one in Dani’s cycle of life. Dani women are required to play their role of wives tasked with ensuring the continuity of the lineage through reproductive roles. It is through this capability that Dani woman will find a position in the *lesema*.²⁴ Managing fields, producing good *hopuru*, turning them into rupiahs in the market, and returning with kitchen spices or ingredients to provide a delicious menu of the food for her husband and children become a space for the Dani woman to express herself as an independent and equal as the Dani men.

The marriage system embraced by the Dani Tribe community is exogamy style (getting married with different tribes) and polygamy (having many wives). The practice of both has been passed down from generation to generation as a necessity. The exogamy is in the form of prohibitions or restrictions known as *motey wita* (a part of the clan attributed to its lineage through the male line and assumes the role of a husband) and *moety waya* (a part of the clan whose lineage is attributed through the female line and assumes the role of wife). This aims that there should be mixing in marriage, because, in the concept of *wita waya* marriage, there is no justification for marriages with the same *moety*, for example, the *wita* consists of the Asso, Elokpere, Lani, and Kuan tribes, and their partner in the *waya* consists of the Yelipele,

²³ An interview with mama Amina, the wife of Sadiq Asso, in Walesi, Jayawijaya, translated into Indonesian (the original interview is in Dani language), 6 May 2022

²⁴ Yelepele, “Perkawinan Adat Muslim Suku Dani di Papua.”

Yaleget, Wetapo, Matuan tribes. Then the two of them must be paired so that they become Assolipele, Yelipelelokpere, Assoyaleget, Lani Tapo, Lani Matuan, and Kuantapo. The concept of marriage like this keeps the dominion stick from moving to other clans or tribes.

In the context of polygamy, Dani tribe marriage focuses on a figure of a woman and pigs as the manifestation of fertility for the Baliem people.²⁵ If a marriage is not blessed with any offspring or is blessed with a daughter, it is almost certain that the man will remarry. On the other hand, even though some of them have been blessed with offspring or sons, the high position they have or caste level in the clan can also be a reason for a second marriage. The purpose of polygamous marriage in the life of the Dani community is to maximize the reproductive role of multiplying the offspring. By having a lot of offspring, marriage is seen as providing benefits to the clan and the wider community. For a husband, the number of offspring he has puts him as a man who contributes to the increase in the number of his clan members. There is social recognition and respect for that. Meanwhile, for Dani women, many children are the symbol of the fertility of the *lesema* in which they live. Thus, the practice of polygamy gains social legitimacy to reproduce power and honor for men, women, and also the clan in general.

In the Dani community, the habit of having multiple wives is typically conducted in four ways. *First*, by proposing. Like a marriage in general, a Dani woman will become a man's partner when someone proposes to her. Approval to get married for a Dani woman depends on the opinion of her parents' relatives. A marriage proposal process will usually discuss the ability of a future husband to pay the dowry in the form of pigs with the number determined by a woman's family at a closed meeting in the *honai*. After that, the marriage ceremony can take place. This proposal process usually occurs at the first marriage of a Dani man who has reached adulthood.

The *second* way to have a wife is done in a slightly extreme way, namely kidnapping a single woman from other clans or even those who have the status of a wife. This is committed by the clan's enemies or other groups who want an inter-clan war. A war for the

²⁵ Aji Dwi Prasetyo, "Perang, Repetisi, dan Kosmos: Sebuah Etnografi tentang Perang pada Masyarakat Lembah Agung Baliem," *Muqoddima: Jurnal Pemikiran dan Riset Sosiologi*, 2020.

Dani community is one of the sacred customs and traditions as a mechanism to achieve a balance of life. This customary war is carried out in accordance with customary provisions passed down from generation to generation. Kidnapping women often become the trigger for war.²⁶ Relating to this, the Alliance tribal chief, Sadiq Asso, said:

"H. Aipon Asso has twelve wives. Some have died, and some have been kidnapped (by the enemy). In the past in Kuantapo, there was a man whose wife was kidnapped by people from Toli, but we had taken them back. Yes, through a war."²⁷

The validation delivered by the alliance tribal chief above actually wants to emphasize that until today, the practice of kidnapping another man's wife for their own is a living and lasting ancestral heritage among the Dani community. Even though this will certainly receive a negative view from the public, the values of this philosophy of life are able to keep and protect them from various global influences until today. Such an environment and a way of life provide evidence that in order to survive, the Dani community will activate and use all of their senses in an effort to defend themselves and their clans.

The *third* way to find a wife in the Dani community is by taking a girl or a woman. This is usually conducted by a leader as a form of leadership responsibility. A clan leader typically takes the widow of his clan member, who died in a war, as his wife. This is necessary and becomes his responsibility so that the widow will not become a disgrace to the clan and bad luck to her family. For Dani women, being a widow due to her husband's death in a war and not being wed by the clan leader is a shame for herself and her family.

The *fourth* way is done by those who have social status and also a lot of *wam* (pig). A person with this criterion will usually choose his future wife through meetings occurring at parties in the *silimo* environment, clan, or confederation. The marriage can take place as

²⁶ Prasetyo, "Perang, Repetisi, dan Kosmos: Sebuah Etnografi Tentang Perang pada Masyarakat Lembah Agung Baliem."

²⁷ An interview with Sadiq Asso, the tribal chief of Assolokobal Alliance in Walesi-Jayawijaya, 6 May 2022

long as the provisions of *wita* and *waya* are complied with. Ownership of property in the form of a large garden, a lot of *wam*, and also the high position in the clan gives a free path to find additional wives. The Dani community does not know caste, but to determine a person's social class, they always use the philosophy of *wen*, *wam*, and *wene*, including in determining the number of wives they could have.

Examining the *nage apik* practice of the Dani tribe further reinforces the notion that polygamy, or marriage with more than one spouse, was known and deeply rooted in many indigenous communities.²⁸ Long before the advent of Islam, polygamy was a prevalent practice within the patriarchal Arabian civilization which was gradually and persuasively regulated by Islam.²⁹ Before the Dani ethnic's encounter with Islam, the practice of having multiple wives with its unique associated customs was a part of their historical marriage system coexisting alongside the exogamous marriage system.³⁰

Living Together Harmoniously in *Lesema*

There is no maximum limit rate for the Dani men's wife ownership. All applies based on the history and culture of the Dani people who have lived in the community for a long time. The Dani's wives live in harmony at one *lesema* in the *silimo*. There is no discrimination and different treatment among one another in the *silimo*. The workload and responsibility for taking care of their husband is equally divided, starting from cooking and serving food, going to the garden, picking the garden products, and selling them to the market, looking for firewood, looking for feed for their pigs or cattle, until taking care of their children.

²⁸ Siti Mahmudah, *Historisitas Syariah: Kritik Relasi Kuasa Khalil 'Abdul Karim* (Yogyakarta: LKiS Pelangi Aksara, 2016); Musdah Mulia, *Pandangan Islam tentang Poligami* (Jakarta: Lembaga Kajian Agama dan Gender, Solidaritas Perempuan dan The Asia Foundation, 1999); Muhammad Husein, et al, *Ijtihad Kyai Husein: Upaya Membangun Keadilan Gender* (Jakarta: Rahima, 2011).

²⁹ Husein, *Ijtihad Kyai Husein: Upaya Membangun Keadilan Gender*; Mustafa Mustafa, "Poligami dalam Kajian *Tafsir Mauḍū'ī*," *Al-Bayyinah*, 2019, <https://doi.org/10.35673/al-bayyinah.v3i2.469>; Bukhori, "Poligami dalam Metode Tafsir Al-Qur'an Muhammad Shahrur."

³⁰ Yelepele, "Perkawinan Adat Muslim Suku Dani di Papua"; Yelepele, "Hukum Islam dan Adat di Papua: Kajian Mahar Babi Sebagai Proses Transisi Perkawinan Adat Muslim Suku Dani."

Likewise, they will cooperate with each other and help other wives' affairs because there are no terms for *mama tua* (old mum) or *mama ade* (young mum). The offspring have the same identity as the daughters or the sons, even though they have been born from different wombs. The wives' activities in the *lesema* do not leave their productive and procreative roles as wives, because having children is a major part of marriage in the Dani community. Moreover, having children will make them the ones who bring fertility to their *lesema* and *silimo*. In the children's care section, there is no division or discrimination in the calling and assignment, including in terms of breastfeeding. If there are two wives with a child at the same time, breastfeeding can be done in turns between the two.

During the observation, researchers found that there are some people who did a polygamy marriage. Table 1 shows the polygamous practice description based on villages and the number of wives.

Table 1. The Number of Polygamous in Walesi District

Village	The number of heads of household	The number of wives
Assolipele	10	2-3
Tulima	2	2-3
Jagara	3	2-3
Apenas	3	2

Source: researchers' observation in 2023

Table 1 provides a quantitative overview of polygamous household numbers in the Walesi District. It confirms that the wives reside together in the same *lesema* or house. *Lesema* only applies to females either children, adults, or the elderly. Males who are allowed to be in the *lesema* are those who are not of proper age yet to be initiated (*mumayyiz*). It is not permissible for a male who has entered the age of initiation until adulthood to enter the *lesema* even if he is a husband or adult son. The males only live in the *honai* and will not allow any female to enter the *honai* for any reason. For the Dani women, harmonious living together in the *lesema* is a form of obedience as a wife to her husband. This value was born from habituation in the Dani people's lifestyle that always uses the advice and teachings of their ancestors echoed repeatedly through the mouth of their mothers and have been practiced in their lives as wives.

During the research, researchers interviewed some informants about the acceptance of Dany Women toward polygamy practices in their environment. The interview excerpts, in Table 2, indicate the expression of acceptance among Dani Women regarding the practice of polygamy.

Table 2. Informants' statements about polygamy practice

Informants' name	Statements (translated)	Categorization
Mama Amina	<i>"Bapak's married to many wives doesn't make us jealous. We're actually happy, sharing tasks, caring wam, taking care of children, and taking hipere. We are solid and cooperate with each other. If there is a traditional event, we usually donate a lot. Bapak is the tribal chief, we have to help a lot"</i> ³¹	Sharing roles
Emi Yeleget	<i>So, in the past, this happened to me. A man proposed to me, but I refused because he already had a wife. My father didn't directly discuss it. He just said that he also had two wives, so if a man comes to propose to you, don't hesitate, especially if the man is well-established in all aspects. But I ...just didn't want it that way</i>	encouragement for polygamy
Sadiq Asso	<i>"Many wives can cooperate with each other. There is no jealousy, let alone desire to dominate. It all depends on the baby they give birth to. If she gave birth to a son, we could stick with this (monogamous marriage), but we usually keep marrying two, three, or more. They (the wives) will be solid in taking care of the children together, and then if there is a traditional event, they will give donations, because it is my responsibility (as a tribal chief). Having many wives means having many children, and that will be a big sign of the ruler's identity and an example for the clan and clan alliance"</i> ³²	Complementing each other
Pike	<i>"Mama, you should teach us when we will get married one day, then our husband will marry another woman; we have to support, we must not refuse"</i> ³³	Making Polygamy a Tradition
Badrika Yelipele	<i>"I'm willing to marry you, but don't divorce your wife"</i> ³⁴	Willingness for Polygamy

Source: researchers' interview result

Based on Table 1, the perpetuity of practicing having many wives in the Dani community is supported by three things: *First*, the

³¹ An interview with mama Amina, the wife of Sadiq Asso, in Walesi, Jayawijaya, translated into Indonesian (the original interview is in Dani language), 6 May 2022

³² An interview with Sadiq Asso, the tribal chief of Assolokobal Alliance in Walesi-Jayawijaya, 6 May 2022

³³ An interview with Pike, in Walesi, 7 May 2022

³⁴ An interview with Badrika Yelipele, 14 June 2023

life history of the Dani community, which adheres to the concept that having a wife means having children. This implies that children or offspring are the main key to the success of a marriage. Not only limited to having offspring and being able to continue the leadership relay, it must also be in large numbers.

Second, the noble values in the Dani people's philosophy of life are known as three, namely *wen*, *wam*, and *wene*. *Wen* (hard work) is a life value that describes the life activities of the Dani people. The habit of subsistence living as their main root makes Dani people able to maintain their lives in various ways, including fighting over natural resources. However, in practice, it is almost not found any male Dani's activities except fighting and clearing land for gardening. It is Dani women who complete everything like housework, farming, taking care of the garden, looking for the firewood, to selling the garden products to the market. This division of work is also an ancestral inheritance that puts Dani woman as the most responsible person for the *silimo*.

The same goes with the *wam* (raising pigs) in which Dani women and *wam* are deemed as a unity that cannot be separated. Pigs for Dani people are central to their life cycle; starting from birth, initiation, proposals, and marriage, until death, they will always be in contact with pigs. *Wam's* philosophical concept is a symbol of Dani men's wealth because they are able to have many pigs as pets, although management and care of these livestock become the responsibility of the wives and no man has ever been involved in raising them. Moreover, the pigpen is placed in the *lesema*. Dani women have to share rooms with pigs and the kitchen as a place for eating. The unification of the pigpen in this *lesema* is a form of the wife's obedience while aiming to protect her husband's wealth.

Dani women will typically spend about 15 hours a day doing their routine work ranging from cooking, taking care of livestock, going to the garden, weeding the grass, taking the garden products, looking for the firewood, bringing the garden produce to the market, shopping, cooking for food, to taking care of their husband's needs. However, they still become the subordinates in every activity they do, even further, what they do is always considered not good enough to please their husband.

Meanwhile, the *wene* (ability to lead or express an opinion) concept in the Dani community requires a Dani man aspiring to be a

leader to have competency. Therefore, a leader must have communication skills and the ability to argue clearly and well. The role of speaking and making a decision in the clan will put the man as the main character. On the contrary, the voices of women are only heard during dinner in the *lesema*. Therefore, *wene* belong to men's responsibility while the previous two, *wam* and *wen*, belong to women.

In the *third* part, there is a permissive attitude towards behavior that puts women as subordinate in all matters as the result of long-standing structural and cultural hegemony. A piece of advice is often echoed to Dani women, either in the *lesema* or in spaces unknown to men, which indicates that women are part of determining fertility from their *silimo*. *May you become the source of life and fertility. May your hands drip with fertility fat. May you become a housewife for the clan and society.*³⁵ On the other hand, a man will be viewed as the one who contributes the most to society the more children he has. This also affects the clan activities. If a family has several wives, the wives will work hand in hand and create solutions to the problems they face.

The phenomenon regarding the practice of polygamy in Dani Muslims seems to explain three things. *First*, the act of positioning women as subordinates in the clan is the unanimity of tradition that represents the dominance of Dani men. *Second*, at the same time, Dani women always ensure this culture of subordination to their generations to generations through the *lesema* and various spaces that allow them to give their teachings about being a good Dani woman. *Third*, the intellectuals and the government, who have the power to formulate policies, seem not to see what is happening to Dani women. These three things can explain the perpetuity of male domination over women and transform into a hegemony for the Dani women to accept their condition as a subordinated group within the Dani community itself.

Legal Implications of Polygamous Practice on Moral and Religion

The life of the Dani community that practices the lifestyle of having more than one wife conducted either by the clan leaders or the general public has become a social fact that lives and is preserved

³⁵ Alua, *Nilai-Nilai Hidup Masyarakat Hubula di Lembah Baliem Papua*.

until this article is written – even after some of them embrace Islam as their religion. The provision of having more than one wife in Islam is narrated in *al-Qur’ān* Surah *an-Nisā’* [4]: 3, which in a plural sense is permissibility with the condition of being able to be fair. As a tradition passed down from generation to generation, this practice is slowly starting to shift from being unlimited in number to being limited to a maximum of four wives, while continuing the traditions in which the community lives. The shift in polygamous practices can be observed in Table 3.

Table 3. The Continuity, Change, and Shift in Polygamous Practices among Dani Muslim Community.

Category	<i>Nage Apik</i>	Polygamy in Dani Muslim
Marriage mechanism	The proposal, abduction/kidnapping, acquisition due to specific circumstances (such as death or defeat in war), or acquisition during the party.	Proposal, succession by a brother or a relative due to a husband’s death
The number of wives	It depends on the willingness and capacity of the man without limits)	Four wives
Pig (<i>Wan</i>)	As a dowry, it is utilized by the family and relatives but can not be utilized by one’s biological parents and grandparents. However, it can be utilized by one’s biological brothers	The pigs are a form of social compensation, neither mentioned in the <i>ijāb qobūl</i> nor recorded in the marriage book but still known as ‘ <i>mas kawin</i> ’. The pigs are allowed for use by family and relatives but not allowed by biological parents and paternal grandparents on both sides. However, it is permissible to utilize for brothers from the same biological parents.

Category	<i>Nage Apik</i>	Polygamy in Dani Muslim
Room (Private space)	Women (wives) live and reside within a single <i>lesema</i>	Women (wives) live and reside within a single <i>lesema</i>
Division of Labour	Based on the fulfillment of living needs within the household	Based on the fulfillment of living needs within the household
Wedding Celebration	<i>Bakar batu</i> (stone burning), a traditional ceremony with the main dish being pork	<i>Walimah</i> (wedding reception), <i>bakar batu</i> , with two holes concept ³⁶

Source: researchers' interview and observation result

Table 3 illustrates the continuity, changes, and shifts in the practice of *nage apik* within the Dani tribe and the gradual adaptation undertaken by the Dani Muslim community. In terms of roles and residence of wives, the pattern remains consistent and is practiced in accordance with customary norms.³⁷ Marriage mechanisms and the limitation on the number of wives are adjusted to Islamic legal norms. Marriages are preceded by the proposal process or arranged by male relatives due to a husband's death.³⁸ The number of wives is restricted to a maximum of 4 in accordance with Qur'anic verse *an-Nisā'* (4): 3. Concerning the dowry of pigs and the tradition of stone burning in the wedding ceremony norms, there found an adaptation and shift while simultaneously adhering to Islamic legal norms regarding prohibition of pork consumption.³⁹

The polygamy practiced by the Dani Muslim community reflects two things; *first*, efforts to comply with religious teachings, let

³⁶ Ahmad Syarif Makatita, et al, "Maintaining Inter-religious Harmony through Acculturation of the Local Tradition in the Dani Muslim Community, Papua," *Walisongo: Jurnal Penelitian Sosial Keagamaan*, 2022.

³⁷ Yanuarious You, "Relasi Gender Patriarkhi dan Dampaknya terhadap Perempuan Hubula Suku Dani, Kabupaten Jayawijaya, Papua," *Sosiohumaniora*, 2019, <https://doi.org/10.24198/sosiohumaniora.v21i1.19335>; Saberia, *Islam di Lembah Baliem Kabupaten Jaya Wijaya*.

³⁸ Prasetyo, "Perang, Repetisi, dan Kosmos: Sebuah Etnografi Tentang Perang pada Masyarakat Lembah Agung Baliem."

³⁹ Makatita, "Maintaining Inter-Religious Harmony through Acculturation of the Local Tradition in the Dani Muslim Community, Papua; Yelipele, "Hukum Islam dan Adat di Papua: Kajian Mahar Babi Sebagai Proses Transisi Perkawinan Adat Muslim Suku Dani"; Yelipele, "Perkawinan Adat Muslim Suku Dani di Papua."

alone Islamic law. At the beginning of Islam development in the Dani community, it was possible for the clan leaders to marry twelve women or more as a way to support one of the important elements so that a man could be considered as 'a big man'⁴⁰ and get respect from the clan members. The value of power is also closely related to the efforts to fulfill the clans' needs which require a lot of human resources, so it becomes a kind of appropriateness or even a necessity for men (husbands) to have many wives. In the context of having many wives, the pig, as a symbol of nobility and wealth in society, must still be given by a man as a wedding gift, which can also be interpreted as compensation for a woman and her clan. In line with that, for Dani people who have chosen Islam as a new religion, the practice of having many wives shows a form of obedience as well as a reason to get Islamic recognition, considering that in some cases, the Dani's Islam cannot be accepted by the mainstream Islam as Yamin found.⁴¹

The expression of compliance with Islamic law is explicitly conveyed by some Muslim leaders among the Dani people as below.

"...Yesterday, my child got married without using pork as part of the dowry. As leaders of the community, we must set a good example, and this is one way to educate the community not to use pork as a dowry anymore... (Sadiq Aso)

"...We have tried various ways to avoid using pork as a dowry. We never write it in the marriage certificate, but it's still given to their relatives. So, Mr. Sadiq also had his child married without using pork as a dowry. We are starting with that..." (H. Adnan Yelipele (Kepala KUA Jayawijaya)

Second, the Dani Muslim's practice of polygamy has implications for the strengthening of discrimination and oppression against women as described in some other research results that

⁴⁰Johsz Mansoben, *Sistem Politik Tradisional di Irian Jaya* (Jakarta: Lembaga Ilmu Pengetahuan (LIPI) dan Leiden University, 1995), 137-165.

⁴¹ Yamin, "Islam Sumber Kebanggaan; Dialektika Agama, Budaya dan Politik Komunitas Dani Papua."

polygamy generally has a negative impact relationally.⁴² Interestingly, the acceptance and willingness of the Dani women to be in a polygamous family by living with other wives together is a form of sublimation that makes them accept the situation without rejection. Sublimation works by diverting negative impulses in the form of rejection and rebellion and replacing them with acceptance that is legitimized by culture. The wives actually build sisterhood to strengthen each other and to share various roles to build the glory in their *lesema*. Nobility is marked by fertility, many children, and success in taking care of their pigs (*wam*). Muslim Dani Women also acknowledge that the practice *nage apik* in their customary traditions aligns with Islamic legal norms with certain limitations. This understanding further strengthens their acceptance of polygamous marriage practices.

The unbalanced construction of masculinity and femininity⁴³ also contributes to the Dani women's acceptance of polygamy. Identity and gender roles in the Dani community that are constructed through rituals, traditions, myths, customary law, and education have influenced acceptance and submission as a necessity. Polygamy is a very effective arena for the operating and aggressiveness of men's power to show their masculinity. On the other hand, femininity is assumed as an acceptance that the Dani women must dedicate so that peace, harmony, and love manifest in the community starting from the *lesema* they live. Within certain limits, balance and harmony can be realized when the division of gender roles is carried out in accordance with the portion without causing injustice. However, Yanuarious's findings show that many Dani men are no longer able to carry out their gender role as the main wage earners, and by using customary authority, they leave their responsibilities to their wives.⁴⁴ In this

⁴² Muhammad Ali Rohmad, "Kesabaran Istri Poligami," *Journal of Islamic Studies and Humanities*, 2017, <https://doi.org/10.21580/jish.11.1372>; Azizah, "Poligami Sirri dan Dampaknya terhadap Mental Istri dan Anak Perspektif Sigmund Freud"; Lahaling, "Dampak Pelaksanaan Perkawinan Poligami terhadap Perempuan dan Anak."

⁴³ Mansour Fakih, *Analisis Gender dan Transformasi Sosial* (Yogyakarta: INSIST Press, 2012); Abdullah Irwan, "Penelitian Berwawasan Gender dalam Ilmu Sosial," *Humaniora*, 2003, <https://doi.org/10.22146/jh.v15i3.794>.

⁴⁴ You, "Relasi Gender Patriarkhi dan Dampaknya terhadap Perempuan Hubula Suku Dani, Kabupaten Jayawijaya, Papua."

situation, women oppose men's masculinity which results in acts of violence against women in various forms.⁴⁵

In a broader concept, what occurs among Dani people shows their mastery or at least knowledge of Islamic law and willingness to comply with it in spite of its differences in some aspects of their customary habits. The number of wives and the use of the pig as the dowry are two of the most essential aspects of their polygamous practice so their willingness to negotiate their (new) belief with the old customary shows openness to the religious teaching on one hand and commitment to preserve their customary in another. This signifies a specific way in how a religious community negotiates the beliefs they embrace and the culture they are born from that it can be a blueprint for the same phenomenon with various backgrounds and contexts.

Conclusion

The practice of polygamy, realized through cohabitation in a *lesema*, illustrates the effort to maintain the strength and authority of men as *ap kain*, who are capable of managing their territories and responsibilities in *honai*, having many children from multiple wives, and managing pig farming, which symbolizes the fertility and prosperity of the *lesema*. From another perspective, this article demonstrates the acceptance of Dani women towards the practice of polygamy, dedicating their compliance to maintain harmony and honor within the *lesema*, *honai*, Dani community, and the broader natural context. The practice of polygamy is a part of the study of Islamic family law with its legal terms and conditions, compared with the different realities of its practice within the Dani Muslim community. The depth of information based on the experiences and perceptions of the research subjects is a strength of this writing. The

⁴⁵ Siti Aisyah and Lyn Parker, "Problematic Conjugations: Women's Agency, Marriage and Domestic Violence in Indonesia," *Contestations Over Gender in Asia*, 2017, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10357823.2014.899312>; Linda Mshweshwe, "Understanding Domestic Violence: Masculinity, Culture, Traditions," *Heliyon*, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2020.e05334>; Xin He and Kwai Hang Ng, "In the Name of Harmony: The Erasure of Domestic Violence in China's Judicial Mediation," *International Journal of Law, Policy and the Family*, 2013, <https://doi.org/10.1093/lawfam/ebs014>; Mufliha Wijayati, "Justice Brokers: Women's Experiences with Injustice and Dependence in the Divorce Process," *Cogent Social Sciences*, 2021.

limitations of this research are evident in the normative legal analysis which does not receive adequate attention in the discussion section. These limitations provide an opportunity for further research. In conclusion, this article presents a new perspective on the practice of polygamy as a part of living law conducted and experienced differently by the Dani Muslim community, especially by women. The acceptance of polygamous practices within the Dani Muslim community is perceived as a cultural doctrine infused with theological energy from religious interpretation reflected by Islamic law. The implications of this study emphasize that polygamy in the context of Dani Muslims remains an effective arena for reproducing male masculinity and perpetuating injustice against women in order to preserve ancestral heritage. The shift from the *nage apik* practice to Dani Muslim-style polygamy gradually offers hope that interpretations of religious teachings that empower and humanize can also bring about a fairer relational order for women and children without the need for extreme cultural root detachment.

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