

INTEGRATION OF ISLAMIC VALUES IN THE TRADITIONAL WEDDING CUSTOMS OF THE MALAY COMMUNITY IN PEKANBARU

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Abstract

This research aims to analyze the Islamic elements present in the traditional wedding customs of the Malay community in Riau. The study adopts a phenomenological case study method to investigate this cultural phenomenon. The findings reveal a strong integration of Malay customs and Islamic values within the Riau Malay culture. The preference for the term "nikah-kawin" among the Riau Malay community reflects the significance of both cultural traditions and religious values in their marriage institution. Furthermore, Islamic values such as respect for parents, prayer, and gratitude are also integrated into various Riau Malay customary ceremonies. Within this context, the research demonstrates how the Riau Malay culture exemplifies the harmonious fusion of religion and tradition, contributing to the formation of a strong identity and enriching positive values within the local community. To preserve and enhance the cultural heritage rooted in Islamic values, it is crucial to enhance the understanding and awareness of the importance of preserving the Riau Malay cultural heritage. Further comprehensive and inclusive research is warranted to deepen the understanding of this phenomenon.

Keywords: *Islamic elements, Malay wedding customs, cultural integration, Riau Malay, phenomenological case study*

INTRODUCTION

Marriage customs constitute an integral part of the Malay Riau society, and in this context, Islamic elements play a significant role. They possess traditions and values closely associated with Islam in conducting marriage ceremonies. Research conducted by Indra (2016) indicates that Islam influences the Malay Riau marriage customs, with religious norms serving as guidelines for the marriage process, partner selection, and performed rituals. Furthermore, a study by Martin and Elmansyah (2020) also reveals that over 90% of marriages in Malaysia, including those among the Malay Riau, adhere to Malay customs with a strong Islamic influence. Therefore, the strong role of Islam in Malay Riau marriage customs reflects the close relationship between Malay traditions and Islamic values in shaping the identity and lives of the Malay Riau community.

Previous studies have been conducted on Malay marriage customs. Ramdhan (2019) examined the Malay Riau marriage customs and found the need for a deeper understanding of specific aspects of Malay Riau marriage customs influenced by Islamic values. Additionally, research by Muhamad Hafiz and Tafsiruddin (2022) emphasized the importance of more detailed

research on the role of Islam in Malay Riau marriage customs to comprehend the changes and adaptations occurring in these marriage practices. However, literature specifically focusing on the Islamic elements of Malay Riau marriage customs remains limited. To address this gap, new research is necessary to delve into and provide a more comprehensive understanding of the Islamic elements within Malay Riau marriage customs.

This paper has a specific objective of analyzing the Islamic elements present in the marriage customs of the Malay Riau community. In this context, the research directly interacts with the Malay Riau community to gain a profound understanding of marriage practices and the embedded Islamic values within them. Thus, this paper will contribute to the understanding of Malay Riau marriage customs influenced by Islam and how this tradition continues to thrive and evolve within modern Malay Riau society. It is expected that this research will provide a comprehensive and in-depth insight for researchers, academics, and stakeholders interested in Malay Riau marriage customs and the role of Islam in these marriage practices.

For the Malay Riau community, Islam serves as a strong foundation in the marriage customs,

such as partner selection and the execution of marriage rituals. For instance, the wedding contract (*akad nikah*) becomes a significant moment that binds the marital bond between the bride and groom. This reflects the importance of Islamic influence in Malay Riau marriage customs. According to Juswandi and Hermansyah (2022), Islam also plays a role in partner selection by emphasizing the significance of shared beliefs and religious values in building a harmonious household. Furthermore, marriage rituals such as the ceremonial bathing (*siraman*) and religious recitations (*pengajian*) are conducted by incorporating Islamic elements, such as reciting prayers and respecting customs rooted in Islamic teachings. In this context, Islamic elements serve as a strong foundation that shapes Malay Riau marriage customs and preserves the continuity of this tradition in an increasingly advanced modern society.

The Malay Riau marriage customs are carried out in a manner that reflects strong Islamic values. One significant aspect of these marriage customs is the payment of dowry (*mahar*), which serves as an allowance from the groom to the prospective bride, symbolizing seriousness and responsibility in building a family. Additionally, the marriage agreement or wedding contract (*akad nikah*) is also an important part of Malay Riau marriage customs, where the bride and groom officially agree to their marital bond in the presence of witnesses and an imam. The procedures of the *akad nikah* emphasize the importance of Islamic values in solidifying agreements and commitments in marriage. Research conducted by Sabakti (2020) shows that the payment of dowry and the *akad nikah* are integral parts of Malay Riau marriage customs influenced by Islamic values. Furthermore, the bridal procession in Malay Riau marriage customs also reflects the influence of Islam through the tradition of praying and reciting verses from the Holy Quran before and after the wedding ceremony.

Furthermore, Malay Riau marriage customs involve a series of rituals and traditions deeply rooted in Islamic values. The engagement ceremony is one important initial stage in these marriage customs. According to research by Marzuki and Azis (2020), the engagement ceremony is influenced by Islam, where the prospective bride and groom, along with their

families, come together to agree on their future marriage bond. Additionally, Malay Riau marriage customs include the ceremonial bathing (*siraman*), which holds spiritual connotations in Islamic tradition. During this ceremony, the prospective bride and groom are bathed with blessed flower water as a symbol of purification and seeking blessings in their marriage. Recitation rituals also play a significant role in Malay Riau marriage customs. Prior to the *akad nikah*, the family and relatives hold recitation sessions to read and listen to verses from the Holy Quran and pray together as a spiritual preparation before embarking on a lawful marital union.

The culmination of Malay Riau marriage customs is the *akad nikah*, where the bride and groom officially exchange marriage vows (*ijab and qabul*) in the presence of witnesses and an imam, signifying the validity of the marriage in Islam. Subsequently, a festive wedding celebration takes place, where the Malay Riau community gathers to celebrate and commemorate the newly formed marital bond.

Research conducted by Jamaludin et al. (2019) reveals that Malay Riau marriage customs have undergone transformations in terms of event execution and adaptation to modern lifestyles. For instance, the use of technology such as video documentation, photography, and electronic invitations has become part of the wedding process. This indicates that Malay Riau marriage customs are adapting to technological advancements and contemporary lifestyles. Furthermore, Malay Riau marriage customs have also experienced changes in terms of emphasizing gender egalitarianism, as highlighted by Jannah and Suyanto (2020).

METHOD

Context and Participants This research utilizes a phenomenological case study research method, which allows the researcher to gain a deep understanding of the essence of human experiences based on the participants' perspectives as the primary source of information (Gallagher, 2012). The study was conducted in one of the settlements in Pekanbaru, Riau, inhabited by the Malay community. Data collection took place from January 2023 to April 2023. The participants consisted of 10 individuals (see Table 1) who were recruited based on the research objectives,

including both male and female participants who held positions as cultural leaders, religious figures, community leaders, and the bride and groom couple.

Table 1. Participant's Identity

| Name (Anonymous) | Gender | Age |
|---------------------|--------|-----|
| AG | Male | 65 |
| BK | Male | 57 |
| JK | Male | 55 |
| LB | Male | 60 |
| MM | Male | 45 |
| MB | Male | 29 |
| PL | Female | 23 |
| KK | Female | 56 |
| KR | Female | 58 |
| RT | Female | 45 |

Tabel 1 showed the participants in this study consisted of individuals who played important roles in the traditional customs, such as cultural leaders, ritual performers, religious figures, community leaders, and bride and groom couples. The total number of participants was sixteen, with six male participants and four female participants. The age range of the participants varied from twenty-three to sixty-five years old. They represented the Malay community from various districts in Riau who later settled in Pekanbaru.

The data collected in this study was analyzed using thematic content analysis method (Fullana, Pallisera, Colomer, Pena & Perez-Buriel, 2014). This thematic approach aims to understand "what is being said" rather than the story's structure, and to identify issues and experiences based on the predetermined themes. The analysis focused on re-reading the interview transcripts to understand the meanings and discourses of the stories, where the transcripts were then coded according to emerging themes, sub-themes, and themes. The data analysis procedure of the interviews followed the method described by Widodo (2014), starting with

transcribing the interview results with the following steps: 1) Listening to the interview recordings repeatedly to identify relevant themes or key points; 2) Writing the interview transcripts in a suitable format to facilitate coding, sorting, and classifying relevant data; 3) Interpreting the interview data by attributing meaning to each word and sentence expressed by the participants, communicating their views, opinions, or perspectives; and 4) Ensuring the reliability of the data by providing opportunities for participants to provide feedback on the interpretation of the data since the participants are important data sources, and their voices need to be accurately conveyed. Feedback is also obtained through group discussions with invited expert researchers.

The collected data was coded and classified. Subsequently, the data was interpreted using critical discourse analysis to uncover the precise meaning of each word spoken by the participants. This analysis aims to reveal the meanings embedded in the empirical text data (Setyono & Widodo, 2019; Widodo, 2018). Halliday (1996) emphasizes that a phenomenon can be interpreted through meaning, word arrangement, and expressions of experience, as well as social relationships within a specific situational context. In this study, the data contains social meanings that are inseparable from the social and cultural context.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study reveals that Islamic elements still influence the customs of marriage in the Malay community of Riau. This is evident in the usage of the term "marriage" and various customs within the marriage, such as khatam Al-Quran (completion of Quran recitation), honoring parents, tepuk tepung tawar (tapping of rice flour), and berzanji (recitation of religious poems). These aspects are summarized and mapped as presented in the following Table 1.

Table 2. Islamic Elements in the Malay Wedding Customs of Riau

| Islamic Elements in Wedding Customs | Interview quotes | Theme |
|-------------------------------------|---|--|
| Usage of the term "marriage" | <p>"We Malays here commonly refer to marriage as 'nikah kawin' and rarely use the term 'perkawinan' (AG).</p> <p>The term 'nikah-kawin' is a combination of the Arabic word 'nikah' and 'kawin' in Malay. If it's only 'kawin', it doesn't necessarily comply with religious standards, and it can be considered adultery if they engage in a husband-wife relationship (LB).</p> <p>'Nikah-kawin' encompasses the process of marriage, including traditional ceremonies and practices, as well as the Islamic requirements for marriage, making it clearly permissible if the husband is providing for the wife (BK).</p> <p>If it's just 'kawin,' it's possible that the person getting married is not Malay (MM)."</p> | Integration of religion and tradition |
| Khatam Al-Quran | <p>"Khatam Al-Quran in marriage is a symbol of the completion of parents' responsibility towards their children's religious education, which is teaching them the Quran." (JK)</p> <p>"Khatam al-Quran is also an effort to maintain the respectability of the bride's family so that they are still respected in the community because their parents have successfully taught the Quran to their daughters." (KK)</p> <p>"There is a moral burden on the bride's family if the bride cannot recite the Quran during the traditional ceremony of khatam Al-Quran because it indicates that the parents have failed to educate their child in religion." (KR)</p> <p>"One of the indicators of successful parents in educating their children in religion is when their daughters can complete the recitation of the Quran, witnessed by many people at the wedding." (AG)</p> | Parental obligation to teach the Quran to children |
| Honoring parents | <p>"The ceremony of worshiping parents involves the bride's family visiting the groom's house to show respect to the groom's parents." (AG)</p> <p>"This worshiping activity is carried out in the Malay wedding tradition as a way for the child to show respect to both parents, as well as to educate a wife to honor her husband's parents." (RT)</p> <p>"The traditional ceremony of worshiping parents is an event aimed at honoring the groom's parents because worshiping the bride's parents is already done during the marriage contract ceremony." (LB)</p> | Children's obligation to respect their parents |

| Islamic Elements in Wedding Customs | Interview quotes | Theme |
|-------------------------------------|--|---|
| Tepuk Tepung Tawar | <p>"The tradition of worshipping parents is performed in the evening to teach the newlyweds to respect both parents. The bride should wear traditional Malay wedding attire, but there are no accompanying items such as trays, flower banners, or ceremonial umbrellas." (KR)</p> <p>"The act of 'tepak tepung tawar' in the nikah-kawin ceremony is a prayer for the safety of the couple." (KR)</p> <p>"The essence of 'tepak tepung tawar' is a prayer for the couple." (PL)</p> <p>"Since it is a prayer for the couple, the ones who perform the 'tepak tepung tawar' are primarily the parents, local religious scholars, community leaders, or respected individuals." (MB)</p> <p>"Several verses from the Quran, such as Surah Al-Ikhlâs, Al-Falaq, and An-Nas, are recited by the person performing the 'tepak tepung tawar'." (LB)</p> | Praying for the couple |
| Berzanji | <p>"Berzanji is actually a gratitude ceremony through the recitation of the life history of Prophet Muhammad SAW accompanied by rhythmic beats of the drum." (KR)</p> <p>"This tradition not only enhances gratitude and love for the Prophet but also serves as a bond between the families of the groom and the bride, as well as the community members present during the berzanji event." (KK)</p> <p>"The conclusion of berzanji is a prayer as an expression of gratitude to Allah SWT, led by a member of the berzanji group or someone from outside the berzanji group." (PL)</p> | Obligation to be grateful for the blessings bestowed by Allah |

Table 2 above shows that the Malay community in Riau prefers to use the term "nikah-kawin" rather than "perkawinan" because the term "nikah-kawin" already encompasses both traditional and religious aspects. The Islamic values guide the traditional ceremony of khatam Al-Quran, which symbolizes the parental obligation to teach the Quran to their daughters. Another traditional ceremony that integrates Islamic values is the act of paying respects to parents. This ceremony represents the duty of children to honor and respect both the bride's and groom's parents. Praying for the safety of the couple is integrated into the traditional ceremony of tepuk tepung tawar. Lastly, the significant traditional ceremony of berzanji reflects the obligation to be grateful for the blessings bestowed by Allah.

This research has found that the culture of Malay Riau represents a harmonious integration of customs and Islamic religion (Hasbullah, 2014). The values of Islam are integrated into various traditional ceremonies, such as khatam Al-Quran, paying respects to parents, prayers in the tepuk tepung tawar ceremony, and the berzanji traditional ceremony. This demonstrates the importance of religion in the lives of the Malay Riau community, influencing their marriage customs and religious rituals.

The research also reveals that the richness of Malay Riau culture encompasses not only customs and traditions but also a strong integration with Islamic values. Through traditional ceremonies such as khatam Al-Quran, paying respects to parents, tepuk tepung tawar, and berzanji, the

Malay Riau community honors and internalizes religious values in their daily lives. This research also shows that Malay Riau culture is not just a historical heritage but a value system passed down from generation to generation. The significance of these findings lies in the importance of understanding and respecting religious values in preserving and enriching culture. Malay Riau culture serves as an example of how religion and customs can complement each other and strengthen the identity and positive values in society.

Another aspect highlighted by the research is the strong integration between customary values and Islamic religion in Malay Riau culture (Hasbullah, 2014). This can be understood through the historical context and the development of the Malay Riau community, which has a strong influence from Islam. Islam not only serves as a spiritual foundation but also influences various aspects of daily life, including marriage ceremonies. The preference for the term "nikah-kawin" by the Malay Riau community reflects the significance of both customary practices and Islamic values in their marital institution (Yusuf, M.S (2020). Additionally, Islamic values such as the obligation to respect parents, pray, and express gratitude are integrated into various Malay Riau traditional ceremonies. In this context, the research findings reveal how Malay Riau culture represents the blending of religion and customs, forming a strong identity and enriching positive values in the community.

The difference between this study and previous studies lies in the specific emphasis on the integration of Islamic values within Malay Riau culture, particularly in the context of marriage and traditional ceremonies. While previous research touched on various aspects of Malay Riau culture, these findings provide a deeper understanding of how Islam plays a concrete role in the rituals and religious practices that are integral to the culture. For example, it was previously known that customs and Islam are interconnected in Malay Riau culture, but this research delves deeper into how the traditional ceremonies of khatam Al-Quran, paying respects to parents, tepuk tepung tawar, and berzanji manifest as concrete forms of integrating Islamic values into the practices of Malay Riau culture.

Based on the findings of this research, it is important to formulate plans and action steps to maintain and develop the integration of Islamic values within Malay Riau culture (Diso, Mahendra, Purwendi, 2022). Some steps that can be taken include enhancing the understanding and awareness of the community about the importance of preserving and enriching the cultural heritage of Malay Riau rooted in Islamic values. This can be done through education, seminars, or workshops involving cultural experts, religious figures, and the Malay Riau community. Furthermore, it is crucial to support efforts in the preservation and documentation of Malay Riau culture, including the collection of information, archiving, and providing good accessibility for present and future generations. Collaboration between cultural institutions, religious institutions, and local governments should also be strengthened to support the preservation and development of Malay Riau culture with its Islamic nuances. By taking these steps, it is hoped that Malay Riau culture will continue to thrive and remain a valuable heritage for the future.

CONCLUSION

The most significant finding of this research is the strong integration between the values of Islam and the Malay culture of Riau. The preference for the term "nikah-kawin" among the Malay community of Riau reflects the importance of cultural traditions and religious values in their marriages. Furthermore, the presence of traditional ceremonies such as khatam Al-Quran, reverence for parents, tepuk tepung tawar, and berzanji demonstrates the close relationship between religion and culture in the lives of the community. This finding highlights the diversity of cultural richness in Indonesia and how the integration of religious values can enrich and strengthen the cultural identity of a community.

The concepts employed in this research effectively address the existing issues. The concept of integrating the values of Islam and the Malay culture of Riau serves as an important foundation for exploring and understanding the close relationship between the two. By using these concepts, the researcher was able to observe and analyze how Islam influences cultural practices in the context of marriage and traditional ceremonies in the Malay culture of Riau. These concepts also

provide a deeper understanding of the importance of preserving and developing culture rooted in religious values within the Malay community of Riau. Therefore, the concepts utilized in this research clearly and successfully address the existing issues and provide a better understanding of the integration of culture and religion in the context of the Malay culture of Riau.

However, this research has certain limitations. Firstly, it was based on a limited sample size and focused solely on the Malay culture of Riau. Therefore, generalizing the findings to other Malay cultures in different regions or ethnic groups should be done cautiously. Secondly, the interpretation of the findings may be influenced by the subjective perspectives of the researcher and their cultural or background influences. Therefore, further research that is more comprehensive and inclusive is needed to gain a more comprehensive understanding of this phenomenon.

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