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## **THE BELIS PAYMENT TRADITION IN KEDANG BARENG MARRIAGE PRACTICES: AN ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVE**

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**Abstract:** This study aims to analyze the practice of paying a dowry (belis) in traditional marriages in the Kedang Bareng community of Lembata Regency and to examine its suitability from an Islamic legal perspective. The belis tradition is a form of respect for the bride's family, but its practice is often viewed as problematic if it places a heavy economic burden on the groom. This study used a qualitative approach with field research methods. Data were collected through interviews with traditional leaders, religious leaders, couples who had previously had a traditional marriage, and village officials as key informants. Data analysis was conducted using an interactive model through the stages of reduction, presentation, and conclusion drawing. The results of this study indicate that the belis in Kedang Bareng has symbolic meaning as a symbol of respect, kinship ties, and confirmation of social status. However, in practice, a high amount of belis can cause socio-economic obstacles, especially for families with limited income. From an Islamic legal perspective, the belis tradition is permitted as long as it does not conflict with the principles of justice, willingness (taradhi), and does not burden either party, as is the principle of marriage in Islam. If belis is viewed as a customary dowry that complements the dowry without eliminating its sharia obligations, then it is permissible. The implication of this research is the need for ongoing dialogue between traditional and religious leaders to adapt the practice of belis to align it more closely with the principles of maqasid al-syari'ah (the principle of Islamic law), particularly in maintaining family welfare and avoiding harm. The results of this study can also serve as a reference in formulating village policies that accommodate both customary and Islamic values in marriages in the Kedang Bareng community.

**Keywords :** Belis, Islamic Law, Traditional Marriage

### **Introduction**

Marriage is an institution that has both religious and socio-cultural dimensions<sup>1</sup>. The belis tradition in Kedang Bareng is part of a socio-

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<sup>1</sup> Ibnu Azka, "Fatwa Di Era Digital: Strategi Komunikasi Majelis Ulama Indonesia Sulawesi Selatan Dalam Mendiseminaskan Fatwa Uang Panai" 2023, <https://digilib.uin-suska.ac.id>

cultural practice that is also widely known in various regions in Indonesia and in other countries<sup>2</sup>. In East Nusa Tenggara (NTT), for example, the belis is a symbol of respect and bond between the bride and groom's families, although it is often criticized for its potential to create an economic burden<sup>3</sup>. Similar practices are also found in the dowry tradition in Bugis-Makassar (Somba), which besides functioning as a symbol of social status also shows stratification in marriage<sup>4</sup>. In the Batak (Tuhor) and Dayak (Panyangkalan) communities, the giving of marital property plays an important role in strengthening family ties<sup>5</sup>. Even in Java, there is a tradition of giving gifts, although in a simpler form<sup>6</sup>.

This phenomenon is not unique to Indonesia. Similar marriage traditions are found in various cultural contexts, reflecting the social and economic dimensions of marital exchanges. In East Africa, for example, the practice of bridewealth among communities such as the Zulu and Shona functions to strengthen kinship ties and social obligations between families<sup>7</sup>. In contrast, in China, the tradition of *caili* (bride price) has increasingly attracted attention due to its potential to impose economic pressure on prospective grooms<sup>8</sup>. These examples demonstrate that marriage payments, while symbolically significant, often generate ethical and socio-economic tensions when they shift from symbolic exchange to

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[suka.ac.id/id/eprint/59838/](https://suka.ac.id/id/eprint/59838/).

<sup>2</sup> Hairuddin K., Abdul Malik Iskandar, and Harifuddin Harifuddin, "The Honor of Women and *Belis* in Manggarai Traditional Marriage Customs," *Society* 12, no. 2 (2024): 214–24, doi:10.33019/society.v12i2.339.

<sup>3</sup> Heribertus Ama Bugis et al., "Budaya Belis Dalam Perspektif Martin Buber : Relasi Aku-Engkau Dalam," *Jurnal Adat Dan Budaya* 7, no. 1 (2025): 119–29.

<sup>4</sup> Aldi Adam, "Eksistensi Somba Sebagai Representasi Kelas Sosial Dalam Perkawinan Adat Bugis Soppeng Perspektif Hukum Islam," *Jurnal El-Thawalib* 6, no. 3 (2025): 370–83.

<sup>5</sup> Siti Dian Natasya Solin et al., "Batak Customary Marriage: A Study of the Prohibition of Same-Clan Marriage and Its Relevance in the Contemporary Era," *El-Usrab* 7, no. 1 (2024): 62–81, doi:10.22373/ujhk.v7i1.23309.

<sup>6</sup> Abi Suar et al., "A Gift to Return: The Tradition of Wedding Gifts Wrapped in Debt Among the People of Kerinci An Islamic Perspective," *Jurnal Mediasas: Media Ilmu Syari'ah Dan Abwal Al-Syakhsiyah* 7, no. 1 (2024): 1–12, doi:10.58824/mediasas.v7i1.105.

<sup>7</sup> Stephanie Rudwick and Dorrit Posel, "Zulu Bridewealth (Ilobolo) and Womanhood in South Africa," *Social Dynamics* 41, no. 2 (2015): 289–306, doi:10.1080/02533952.2015.1060683.

<sup>8</sup> Snigdha Konar, "Increasing Bride Price in China : An Unresolved Agenda," *Institute of Chinese Studies* 2023.

material burden—an issue that is central to the analytical discussion of *belis* from an Islamic perspective.

In Islamic teachings, marriage is seen as a contract that aims to create peace, affection and the continuation of offspring<sup>9</sup>. The elements that constitute the conditions for a valid marriage are consent, guardian, witness, and dowry as the wife's rights which must be fulfilled<sup>10</sup>. Beyond these elements, the community often carries out traditional traditions inherent in the wedding procession, one of which is the practice of paying a dowry (*belis*) in Kedang Bareng, Lembata Regency, East Nusa Tenggara.

*Belis* is interpreted as a form of respect from the groom's family to the bride's family<sup>11</sup>. This tradition not only serves as a symbol of respect but also strengthens the kinship between the two families of the prospective bride and groom. However, in practice, the size of the dowry often causes problems<sup>12</sup>. It is not uncommon for men to experience heavy economic burdens, resulting in delays or even obstacles to the implementation of marriage<sup>13</sup>. This situation raises important questions regarding the position of *belis* in Islamic law, particularly when customary practices clash with sharia principles.

In the context of Islamic law, custom or 'urf holds an important position as long as it does not conflict with sharia. Scholars distinguish between 'urf *ṣahīḥ*, customs that are in line with Islamic principles, and 'urf *fāsid*, customs that are contrary to sharia<sup>14</sup>. *Belis* can be categorized as 'urf *ṣahīḥ* if the practice is carried out proportionally, is not burdensome, and does not eliminate the dowry obligations which are the

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<sup>9</sup> Radhiya Bustan, Bagus Riyono, and Diana Setiyawati, "The Essence of Marriage from an Islamic Psychological Perspective," *International Journal of Islamic Psychology* VIII, no. 2010 (2025).

<sup>10</sup> (Banoo & Ahmed, 2024)

<sup>11</sup> Theresia Avila Chastysima Daku, "Dinamika Tradisi Belis Di Era Modern: Perspektif Orang Tua Di NTT," *Journal of Indonesian Scholars for Social Research* 5, no. 1 (2025): 123–33.

<sup>12</sup> Sanjeet Kumar et al., "An Insight into Dowry Deaths: The Untold Stigma and Torment of a Social Evil," *Cureus* 16, no. 12 (2024): 1–10, doi:10.7759/cureus.76348.

<sup>13</sup> Jean Lakamau and Doddy Hendro Wibowo, "Resiliensi Dalam Badaai: Belis Dan Fenomena Kekerasan Dalam Rumah Tangga Di Kabupaten Alor," *Jurnal Ilmiah Bimbingan Konseling Undiksha* 12, no. 1 (2021): 39–48, doi:10.23887/jjbk.v12i1.33110.

<sup>14</sup> Andriyaldi Andriyaldi, "Al-'Urf Theory and Its Relevance to Contemporary Jurisprudence Issues," *Al Hurriyah: Jurnal Hukum Islam* 6, no. 2 (2022): 29, doi:10.30983/alhurriyah.v6i2.4784.

pillars of marriage. On the other hand, when belis causes harm in the form of economic burden, injustice, or discrimination, then it is closer to 'urf fāsid which needs to be criticized.

Apart from that, *maqāṣid al-syārī'ah* as the main objective of Islamic law can also be used to assess the practice of belis. *Maqāṣid* emphasizes the importance of protecting religion, soul, mind, lineage and property<sup>15</sup>. If the belis tradition in Kedang Bareng maintains family honor, strengthens social ties, and does not threaten the continuity of the household, then this tradition aligns with the *maqāṣid al-syārī'ah* (the principles of Islamic law). However, if the belis actually creates injustice, social conflict, or undermines the primary purpose of marriage, then the practice must be reviewed.

Previous studies on belis have provided important insights into its social, cultural, economic, and gendered dimensions across different regions. Research on East Flores<sup>16</sup>, for instance, emphasizes the symbolic role of belis in constructing social status, while studies in Sumba highlight its function in reinforcing social cohesion through philosophically meaningful exchanges<sup>17</sup>. Other works approach belis from a gender perspective, revealing patriarchal structures that often disadvantage women, and some Islamic legal studies—such as those conducted in Lombok—have examined belis primarily in terms of its permissibility as a customary complement to the Islamic dowry (*mahr*)<sup>18,19</sup>.

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<sup>15</sup> Nasir Muhammad Abdulhameed, "Ethical Dimension of Maqasid Al-Shari'ah and Its Implication to Human Capital Development," *IJISH (International Journal of Islamic Studies and Humanities)* 4, no. 1 (2021): 20, doi:10.26555/ijish.v4i1.2621.

<sup>16</sup> Oksiana Jatiningsih Leta, Finsensia Clarita Gharu, "Fungsi Belis Pada Masyarakat Desa Kurulimbu Kecamatan Ndona Timur Kabupaten Ende Flores Nusa Tenggara Timur," *Journal of Chemical Information and Modeling* 53, no. 9 (2017): 1–15, <http://www.elsevier.com/locate/scp>.

<sup>17</sup> Maharanny Setiawan Poetri, Teul Panda Banjal, and Rita Enga Lika, "Simbolisme Dan Makna Tradisi Belis Dalam Perkawinan Adat Suku Baradita Sumba Timur," *Jurnal Penelitian Budaya* 9, no. 2 (2024): 30–38, <http://ojs.uho.ac.id/index.php/JPeB%0D>.

<sup>18</sup> I Putu Dwika Ariestu Ni Luh Ita Sari, "Cedaw: Advokasi Kaum Feminisme Melawan Perampasan Hak-Hak Perempuan Oleh Tradisi Adat Di Nusa Tenggara Timur," *Jurnal Locus Delicti* 5, no. 2 (2021): 1–20.

<sup>19</sup> Doni Azhari and Syihabuddin Qalyubi, "The Rights of Sasak Noble Muslim Women in Choosing A Mate: An Analysis of the Marriage of Noble Women With Jajar Karang Men From the Perspective of Islamic Law," *Al'Adalah* 20, no. 2 (2023): 381–404, doi:10.24042/adalah.v20i2.18416.

Despite these contributions, existing studies tend to treat belis either as a socio-cultural phenomenon or as an object of normative legal assessment, without sufficiently integrating empirical findings into a coherent Islamic analytical framework. In particular, they rarely engage systematically with the concepts of 'urf and maqāṣid al-sharī'ah as dynamic tools for evaluating and ethically guiding marriage customs. This study advances the discussion theoretically by positioning belis as a form of living 'urf that can shift between 'urf ṣāḥīḥ and 'urf fāsid depending on its alignment with Islamic ethical objectives. By doing so, the research moves beyond descriptive or permissibility-based analyses and offers a conceptual model for understanding how local marriage traditions may be critically reinterpreted and reoriented toward maslahah within an Islamic perspective.

Therefore, this research is essential to fill the existing gap by offering an analytical discussion of the belis tradition in Kedang Bareng from an Islamic perspective. Rather than focusing solely on questions of legal permissibility, this study seeks to explore how Islamic values interact with local marriage customs and shape the ways in which the belis tradition is maintained, negotiated, transformed, or reinterpreted within the community. Through this approach, the research aims to contribute to the development of Islamic studies that are rooted in local wisdom, particularly in understanding how normative Islamic principles such as justice, moderation, and social benefit are lived and contextualized in customary practices.

At the same time, this study provides a critical reflection on contemporary belis practices, especially in cases where excessive economic demands have resulted in social and financial hardship. This critique is not intended to negate tradition, but to emphasize that the preservation of local customs should remain aligned with Islamic ethical values that prioritize maslahah (public benefit). Furthermore, the findings of this research are expected to encourage constructive dialogue among traditional leaders, religious authorities, and village governments, enabling the belis tradition to be adapted without losing its symbolic meaning while remaining consistent with Islamic teachings. In this way, the study not only enriches academic discourse on the relationship between Islam and local culture, but also offers practical contributions to fostering harmony between custom and sharia in the social life of the Kedang Bareng community.

## Method

This research uses a qualitative approach with a field study method<sup>20</sup>. However, the qualitative approach in this study is not limited to empirical data collection; it is intentionally designed to support an analytical examination of how Islamic values and legal reasoning are understood, negotiated, and applied in local marriage practices. This method was chosen based on the research objective of understanding the practice of dowry payments in traditional Kedang Bareng marriages in depth, both from a cultural perspective and from an Islamic legal perspective. The qualitative approach encouraged researchers to explore the experiences, perspectives, and interpretations of traditional practitioners and religious leaders more comprehensively through direct interactions in the field.

The research location is Kedang Bareng Village, Lembata Regency, East Nusa Tenggara. The location was selected purposively, taking into account several considerations. This village was chosen because its people consistently maintain the tradition of belis (wealth offering) in every traditional wedding ceremony, making it relevant for research. Furthermore, Kedang Bareng has a unique social dynamic, characterized by interactions between Muslim communities adhering to Islamic teachings and strong traditional traditions, providing a closer look at the relationship between customary law and Islamic law. Research in this area is also crucial due to the lack of academic studies specifically addressing belis in Kedang Bareng from an Islamic legal perspective.

The research data sources consisted of primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained through interviews with seven informants: two traditional leaders, two religious figures, one prospective bride and groom, and two married couples who previously married using the belis tradition. Secondary data consisted of academic literature, journals, books, and relevant traditional documents. Informants were selected purposively, selecting individuals deemed to have a deep understanding of the belis practice and its implications. The number of informants was adjusted as needed until the data obtained reached saturation point.

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<sup>20</sup> Miza Nina Adlini et al., "Metode Penelitian Kualitatif Studi Pustaka," *Edumaspul: Jurnal Pendidikan* 6, no. 1 (2022): 974–80, doi:10.33487/edumaspul.v6i1.3394.

Data collection was conducted through semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and documentation. Interviews were used to explore informants' perspectives and experiences regarding the belis (price dowry), while participant observation was conducted by researchers to directly witness the traditional procession, particularly those involving the payment of the belis. Documentation was used to corroborate the findings through archives, official records, and related literature.

Data analysis was carried out using an interactive analysis model which includes data reduction, data presentation and drawing conclusions. Data reduction is carried out by selecting and simplifying information that is relevant to the research focus. The data presentation is then arranged in the form of a descriptive narrative to make it easier to understand, while conclusions are drawn by linking the empirical findings to the Islamic legal framework, especially *maqasid al-syari'ah* and the concept of custom ('urf).

To ensure data credibility, this study employed triangulation. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing information obtained from different categories of informants, while method triangulation was achieved through the integration of semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and documentation. In addition to these strategies, ethical considerations were explicitly applied throughout the research process. Prior to data collection, all participants were informed about the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of their participation, and their right to withdraw at any stage without consequence. Informed consent was obtained verbally and/or in writing from all participants before interviews and observations were conducted. Given the sensitivity of marriage customs and the involvement of religious and traditional authorities, particular attention was paid to ensuring confidentiality and anonymity. Participants' identities were anonymized using pseudonyms, and any identifying information was omitted from the reporting of findings.

The study adhered to general ethical principles of qualitative research, including respect for participants, non-maleficence, and cultural sensitivity. These ethical safeguards ensure that the research not only meets standards of scientific validity but also upholds ethical responsibility in examining socio-religious practices within the Kedang Bareng community.

## Result and Discussions

### Overview of the Belis Tradition in the Kedang Bareng Community

The following section presents the empirical findings derived from fieldwork in Kedang Bareng. These findings describe the forms, processes, and social meanings of the *belis* tradition as articulated by community members and observed in practice. The subsequent discussion section analytically interprets these findings through an Islamic perspective, particularly using the concepts of ‘urf and *maqāṣid al-sharī‘ah*.

East Nusa Tenggara (NTT) is a region characterized by rich cultural diversity, customs, and local traditions. One of the traditions that remains strongly maintained is the practice of traditional marriage, particularly the payment of *belis* as a form of customary dowry<sup>21</sup>. In the Kedang Bareng community of Lembata Regency, *belis* occupies a central role in marriage ceremonies and is consistently practiced in every traditional wedding.

Field findings indicate that *belis* is understood not merely as a material transfer from the groom’s family to the bride’s family, but as a symbol of respect, responsibility, and social legitimacy. Informants emphasized that *belis* represents recognition of the bride’s family and confirms the social bond between the two extended families. As one traditional leader stated:

“The dowry is not the price of the woman, but a sign that the man’s family respects and is responsible for the woman he marries”  
(ABL, personal communication, June 20, 2025)

According to informants, the history of *belis* among the Kedang community has been transmitted orally through traditional elders and institutions. In earlier periods, *belis* often consisted of highly valuable items such as elephant ivory, gongs, and large quantities of livestock. Informants noted that after the traditional seminar in 1963, adjustments were made to prevent excessive burdens on the community, while maintaining the symbolic significance of *belis* (IM, AL, SBP, personal communications, June 2025).

### Forms and Components of Belis

The findings show that *belis* in Kedang Bareng consists of multiple components agreed upon by both families. These typically include gongs of specific sizes and quantities, gold, party money, breast milk money,

<sup>21</sup> Daku, “Dinamika Tradisi Belis Di Era Modern: Perspektif Orang Tua Di NTT.”

livestock, household goods, and symbolic payments known as *jaga welok* (door barriers). The amount and composition of *belis* are influenced by the bride's social status and educational background. Informants consistently explained that higher educational attainment and family standing generally result in a higher *belis* obligation.

### **Social Consequences of Belis Payment**

Analysis of the interview data reveals that *belis* produces distinct social consequences related to kinship integration, marital legitimacy, and economic obligation. Empirical data indicate that the payment of *belis* carries significant social consequences. Once the *belis* is fully paid, the bride is considered officially part of the groom's family according to customary norms, and her formal ties with her family of origin are regarded as complete. In this sense, *belis* functions not only as a marital requirement but also as a social mechanism that regulates kinship relations, economic distribution, and the legitimacy of marriage within the customary framework.

### **Stages in Determining and Delivering Belis**

The process of determining *belis* follows a structured and symbolic sequence involving immediate family members, extended kin, traditional leaders, and religious figures. The initial stage, *Dahang Rehing*, involves a formal visit by the groom's family to express marital intentions through the offering of betel nut. This is followed by *Uang Bele*, a deliberative forum where the amount and components of *belis* are discussed.

Subsequent stages include *Noling Telu Weling Telu*, in which the groom's family formally agrees to the determined *belis*, and *Mawupapung*, a larger family gathering to coordinate wedding preparations and contributions. The *Umarotang* stage involves the formal delivery of *belis*, followed by *Pilok Bolong*, during which the bride's maternal relatives bring household items. The final stage, *Jaga Welok*, requires the fulfillment of remaining symbolic obligations before the groom may formally meet the bride after the marriage ceremony.

Below, the author attaches the results of interviews with several key informants, presented in table form to make it easier to understand the flow and perspective of each informant.

**Table 1. Summary of Interview Results about Belis in Kedang Bareng**

Informant	Age	Role/Status	Views on Belis	Statement Quote
DMN	60 years old	Traditional figures	Belis is a legal requirement for traditional marriage and a symbol of respect for the woman's family.	"If there's no dowry, then the relationship isn't complete. That means the man's family hasn't officially come to take the woman from theirs."
PTRS	55 years old	Traditional figures	The size of the dowry indicates the family's social standing and pride.	"If a girl goes to college, her dowry will also be high. That's common here. That's why families feel proud if their dowry is large."
ABD	45 years old	Islamic religious figures	Belis is permissible as long as it is not burdensome; the dowry remains mandatory.	"Belis is permissible, as long as it's not burdensome. In Islam, the dowry is obligatory. Belis can be considered an additional payment, a good custom."
Pdt. MRKS	50th	Christian religious figures	Belis is a cultural identity, but it needs to be done wisely so as not to burden the younger generation.	"This dowry is a tradition. It can't just disappear... but don't let it become a matter of prestige, one that burdens young people."
JLS	28 years old	Young man (future bride and groom)	Belis is considered expensive and causes the wedding to be delayed.	"We want to get married, but the dowry is too expensive. So we're waiting until our families can save up the money."
MRA	25 years old	young bride	Belis is seen more as a burden than a symbol of honor.	"If in the past parents considered the dowry a source of pride, now many young people feel it is an obstacle."
STFNS	30 years old	young bride	Belis is still important, but the amount must be according to	"I agree that the dowry should still exist, but the amount should be adjusted to the capabilities of the groom's family."

Informant	Age	Role/Status	Views on Belis	Statement Quote
			the family's ability.	

Source: Data Analysis, 2025

The interview data reveal three interrelated analytical themes that structure community perspectives on belis in Kedang Bareng marriages: (1) social legitimacy, (2) economic burden, and (3) intergenerational tension.

First, belis is framed by traditional leaders as a source of social and legal legitimacy within customary law. From this perspective, marriage without belis is considered incomplete and socially invalid. One customary elder emphasized that belis is not merely ceremonial but constitutes the foundation of marital recognition within the adat system, stating:

“Without belis, the marriage is not recognized by custom; it has no standing in the community”

This view positions belis as a normative mechanism that authorizes marriage and formally integrates the bride into the groom's kinship network.

Second, the interviews highlight belis as an economic burden, particularly for younger couples and families with limited financial resources. Several informants acknowledged that the rising material value of belis has transformed its meaning from symbolic reciprocity into an onerous obligation. A married participant noted:

“The meaning is respect, but in reality, it often becomes a heavy burden that delays marriage”

This theme illustrates how economic pressures complicate the ethical justification of belis, especially when its implementation contradicts the principle of ease (*taysir*) emphasized in Islamic legal ethics.

Third, the data indicate a growing intergenerational tension between elders who seek to preserve customary authority and younger community members who question the proportionality and relevance of belis in contemporary contexts. While elders interpret belis as an inherited moral duty, younger informants tend to emphasize practicality and religious sufficiency through mahar. One young informant expressed :

“We respect tradition, but Islam already requires mahar. Belis should not make marriage difficult”

This tension reflects an ongoing negotiation between adat continuity and Islamic reinterpretation, revealing how belis operates as a contested practice rather than a static tradition.

Taken together, these themes demonstrate that belis in Kedang Bareng functions simultaneously as a marker of legitimacy, a site of economic negotiation, and a locus of generational contestation. This thematic complexity moves the analysis beyond description and provides an analytical foundation for examining belis through the lenses of 'urf and *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* in the subsequent discussion.

### **Discussion**

#### **The Interaction between Islamic Values and Local Marriage Traditions**

The findings of this study show that the belis tradition in Kedang Bareng has an ambivalent position: on the one hand, it functions as a symbolic instrument of respect for the woman's family; on the other hand, its practice can create its own economic burden. From an Islamic legal perspective, discussions about belis can be analyzed through the theory of 'urf (custom), which is one of the secondary sources in legal *istinbāt*. 'Urf is generally defined as a custom or social practice that applies in a society and is widely accepted as something good (*al-'ādāt al-mu'tabarah*). Scholars divide 'urf into two categories: 'urf *ṣahīḥ* (authentic custom) and 'urf *fāsid* (defective custom). 'Urf *ṣahīḥ* are customs that do not conflict with the principles of sharia, while 'urf *fāsid* are customs that are contrary to Islamic values (Ibn 'Ābidīn, *Radd al-Muhtār*, 1992).

When viewed using these criteria, belis can essentially be interpreted as 'urf *ṣahīḥ*, because it serves to strengthen family ties, mark social ties, and maintain women's honor. This function is in line with the *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*, especially the principles of *hifz al-nasl* (protecting offspring) and *hifz al-īrd* (protecting honor). However, belis has the potential to shift into 'urf *fāsid* when determined in excessive amounts, causing difficulties, debt, and even delaying or failing a marriage. In this context, the fiqh principle of *al-'ādah muhakkamah* (custom can be a legal consideration) needs to be understood together with the principle of *lā ḫarar wa lā ḫirār* (should not harm oneself or others).

This finding also enriches the academic literature on belis. For example, research<sup>22</sup> In his study, he showed the transformation of belis in

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<sup>22</sup> Daku, "Dinamika Tradisi Belis Di Era Modern: Perspektif Orang Tua Di

NTT from merely a cultural symbol to a transactional one, although concerns about debt and economic burdens are important factors in post-marriage well-being.<sup>23</sup> also emphasized that belis is often interpreted as a symbol of social status that actually burdens low-income families. International research, such as that conducted<sup>24</sup> In Southwest Sumba, it even shows more serious social impacts, namely the increasing practice of elopement, postponement of marriage, and pregnancy outside marriage as a form of resistance to the burden of belis.

Compared with previous research, the findings in Kedang Bareng are consistent with these dynamics, but add a rarely touched-upon normative dimension : belis is not merely positioned as an economic and cultural issue, but can also be interpreted within the framework of Islamic law through the theory of 'urf. Thus, this tradition does not need to be abolished, but rather reformed so that it remains functional as a symbol of honor and cultural identity, while also being in line with sharia principles. This is the novelty of this research : it presents a synthesis between anthropological studies of adat and normative analysis of Islamic law.

Furthermore, this discussion has implications for the development of an interdisciplinary approach in the study of local traditions. If research<sup>25</sup> in Flores, belis is interpreted as a symbol of family equality, and<sup>26</sup> By highlighting its economic burden, this study attempts to position belis as a 'urf *sahīh*' that needs to be controlled so that it does not fall into 'urf *fāsid*'. This reform is in line with the views of contemporary scholar Yusuf Al-Qaradawi who emphasizes the importance of contextualizing sharia in dealing with local cultural dynamics<sup>27</sup>. Thus, this study confirms that belis

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NTT."

<sup>23</sup> Al. Jenau et, "Pendidikan Dan Status Sosial Sebagai Patokan Belis Pada Perkawinan Adat Manggarai Di Desa Orong Kecamatan Welak Kabupaten Manggarai Barat," *Jurnal Inovasi Dan Teknologi Pendidikan* 3, no. 1 (2024): 1–240.

<sup>24</sup> I Made Sila, I Nengah Sudiarta, and Maria Goreti Amurni, "The Dynamics of the Meaning of Belis in the Marriage Tradition of Sumba People in Weepatando Village," *International Journal of Education and Social Science Studies* 1, no. 1 (2024): 8–13, doi:10.60153/ijesss.v1i1.79.

<sup>25</sup> Leo and Bunga, "The Existence of Dowry Demands (Belis) and Marital Failure as Criminogenic Factors in the Occurrence of Criminal Provocative Abortions and Other Crimes in the City of Kupang."

<sup>26</sup> Daku, "Dinamika Tradisi Belis Di Era Modern: Perspektif Orang Tua Di NTT."

<sup>27</sup> Murie Hassan, "Yusuf Al-Qaradawi's Jurisprudence of Priorities: A Critical

is not only an object of ethnographic study, but also a field of normative dialogue that brings together customs, sharia, and the socio-economic needs of modern society.

Based on the findings presented above, the author argues that a reinterpretation of the practice of belis is necessary, not by eliminating it, but rather by returning it to its original function as a symbol of culture and social ties. In this way, belis can be maintained as 'urf *ṣahīh*, while also being adapted to the socio-economic conditions of the community so as not to cause harm. A new finding in this study is the dialectical analysis between custom and Islamic law. Belis in Kedang Bareng is positioned in two faces: on the one hand, as a cultural heritage that still contains social values and respect, but on the other hand, it has the potential to become an economic burden that contradicts the *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*. This study offers a reinterpretation that belis can be preserved as a cultural symbol as long as it is not interpreted as a material transaction that blocks the younger generation's access to marriage. Thus, this study provides an academic contribution in integrating customary law and Islamic law approaches, as well as opening space for the reformulation of traditions so that they remain contextual with the spirit of justice, ease, and welfare in marriage.

## Conclusion

Based on the findings and discussion, this study concludes that the belis payment tradition in the traditional marriages of the Kedang Bareng community occupies a complex position within the socio-religious life of the community. On the one hand, belis continues to function as an important symbol of respect, social bonding, and cultural identity; on the other hand, its contemporary implementation has the potential to impose significant economic pressure, particularly on men. From an Islamic perspective, the analysis of belis through the concept of 'urf demonstrates that this tradition can be categorized as 'urf *ṣahīh* insofar as it aligns with the ethical objectives of *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*, especially in preserving dignity, social harmony, and the continuity of family lineage. However, when the determination of belis becomes excessive and leads to economic

hardship, it may shift into ‘urf fāsid, as it contradicts the Islamic ethical principle of lā ḥarār wa lā ḥirār (no harm and no reciprocating harm).

Accordingly, this study does not propose the abolition of the belis tradition, but rather its reinterpretation and reformulation from an Islamic perspective that integrates legal reasoning with ethical and social considerations. Such a reinterpretation allows belis to retain its symbolic and cultural significance without becoming economically exploitative, thereby ensuring its harmony with sharia values. In this regard, the study offers an analytical contribution by bridging anthropological insights with normative Islamic legal thought. While previous studies have largely emphasized the economic, social status, or psychosocial dimensions of belis, this research introduces a distinct perspective by positioning belis as a form of ‘urf that can be ethically directed toward practices that generate maslahah.

Despite these contributions, this study acknowledges several limitations. First, the empirical data are confined to the Kedang Bareng community and therefore do not capture the diversity of belis practices in other regions. Second, the analysis primarily focuses on Islamic legal perspectives through the theory of ‘urf, leaving psychosocial, gender, and microeconomic dimensions relatively unexplored. Third, the availability of empirical comparative studies remains limited. Future research is encouraged to expand the geographical scope of analysis and to adopt a multidisciplinary approach involving anthropology, social psychology, gender studies, and family economics. Moreover, comparative studies between belis and dowry practices in various Muslim communities would make a valuable contribution to contemporary social fiqh, particularly in formulating models of customary practices that are adaptive, ethically grounded, and firmly rooted in Islamic values.

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