

MARRIAGE PROHIBITION DURING MUHARRAM IN JAVANESE CUSTOMARY TRADITION: An Analysis from the Perspective of Islamic Law

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini menganalisis larangan pernikahan pada bulan Muharram dalam tradisi masyarakat Jawa di Desa Dalu X-A, Kecamatan Tanjung Morawa, Kabupaten Deli Serdang, serta menilainya dari perspektif hukum Islam. Penelitian menggunakan desain lapangan deskriptif dengan pendekatan kualitatif. Informan dipilih secara purposif dari tokoh adat dan tokoh masyarakat yang memahami serta masih memegang tradisi tersebut. Data diperoleh melalui observasi, wawancara, dokumentasi, dan kajian pustaka, kemudian diperiksa melalui perpanjangan pengamatan serta triangulasi sumber, teknik, dan waktu. Analisis dilakukan secara kualitatif melalui reduksi data, penyajian data, penarikan kesimpulan, dan analisis isi dengan pendekatan fikih Islam. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa masyarakat menghindari pernikahan pada bulan Muharram karena bulan tersebut dipandang sakral, dimuliakan, dan terkait dengan penghormatan terhadap warisan leluhur serta upaya menjaga harmoni adat. Sebagian masyarakat juga mengaitkan pelanggaran pantangan dengan musibah, konflik rumah tangga, atau kesialan. Dalam hukum Islam, tidak terdapat nas yang melarang pernikahan pada bulan Muharram selama rukun dan syarat nikah terpenuhi. Tradisi dapat dihormati sebagai adat, tetapi keyakinan bahwa bulan Muharram secara intrinsik membawa kesialan tidak dapat dibenarkan secara syar'i. Temuan ini menegaskan pentingnya membedakan penghormatan budaya dari keyakinan kausal yang

Kata kunci: Kata kunci: Pernikahan Muharram, Tradisi Jawa, Hukum Islam

Abstract

This study analyzes the prohibition of marriage during Muharram in the Javanese tradition of Dalu X-A Village, Tanjung Morawa District, Deli Serdang Regency, and evaluates it from the perspective of Islamic law. The research employed descriptive field research with a qualitative approach. Informants were purposively selected from customary and community figures who understood and continued to observe the tradition. Data were collected through observation, interviews, documentation, and literature review, while validity was examined through prolonged observation and source, technique, and time triangulation. The data were analyzed qualitatively through reduction, display, conclusion drawing, and content analysis using an Islamic jurisprudential perspective. The findings show that residents avoid marriage during Muharram because the month is regarded as sacred and honored, while compliance also expresses respect for ancestral inheritance and customary harmony. Some residents additionally associate violation of the taboo with misfortune, marital conflict, or calamity. Islamic law contains no specific textual prohibition against marriage during Muharram when the pillars and requirements of marriage are fulfilled. The custom may be respected as cultural practice, but attributing intrinsic misfortune to Muharram is not religiously

Keywords: Keywords: Muharram Marriage, Javanese Tradition, Islamic Law

INTRODUCTION

Marriage in Islam is both a religiously regulated covenant and a social institution through which family life, lineage, mutual responsibility, and domestic tranquility are organized. Its validity is determined by established legal requirements rather than by assumptions that a particular month is inherently fortunate or unfortunate. Yet marriage is never practiced in a cultural vacuum. In many Javanese communities, decisions concerning partners, ceremonies, and wedding dates remain connected to inherited systems of meaning. Javanese marriage traditions contain ethical and symbolic values concerning family harmony, social ties, and preparation for married life (Aziz, 2017).

At the same time, customary calculations and prohibitions can become socially authoritative even when they are not identical to Islamic legal rules (Kholik, 2019; Nafi'ah & Setyawan, 2022). This intersection makes wedding timing a significant site for examining the relationship between local custom and Islamic normativity (Harisudin, 2016). Muharram, commonly called Suro in the Javanese calendar, occupies a particularly complex position. It is treated as a sacred period associated with reflection, ritual restraint, and inherited narratives about danger as well as spiritual purification. Studies of Suro rituals show that Javanese communities often combine religious devotion, communal solidarity, and beliefs concerning safety or misfortune within the same cultural space (Nurdiani, 2013; Siburian & Malau, 2018; Aryanti & Zafi, 2020).

Such meanings can generate a practical taboo against organizing major celebrations, especially weddings. Lestari et al. (2020) found that community perceptions of Suro as a sacred and potentially inauspicious month sustained avoidance of marriage. Minan and Thobroni (2021) similarly reported that beliefs about calamity and marital instability remained influential in community attitudes toward Muharram weddings. Recent scholarship has examined this tension directly. Prayitno and Ishaq (2022) found that the prohibition in Ngampelrejo was maintained through ancestral habit and anxiety about harmful consequences, although marriage in Suro remained legally valid in Islamic law. Mardiantari et al.

(2022) reached a comparable conclusion in Central Lampung: no specific Qur'anic or Prophetic text establishes Muharram as a prohibited time for marriage, while belief that the month itself causes calamity is religiously problematic. Indiantoro et al. (2022) interpreted the prohibition as a product of interaction and syncretism between Javanese religious culture and Islamic understandings. Jeni and Khairuddin (2024) likewise showed that adherence to the taboo can function as inherited social protection even while Islamic law recognizes no temporal prohibition. Nadia (2024) further demonstrates that Muharram is simultaneously regarded as culturally sensitive and religiously honored, producing an interpretive tension rather than a simple opposition between religion and custom.

These studies establish an important foundation, but local meanings remain context dependent. The thesis on which this article is based identifies a distinctive situation in Dalu X-A Village, Tanjung Morawa, Deli Serdang, where a predominantly Muslim Javanese community continues to avoid weddings during Muharram. The practice is not explained only through fear.

Field accounts also connect abstention from weddings with respect for the sacredness of Muharram, remembrance of significant events, inherited obedience to elders, and preservation of family and customary harmony. This combination matters because Islamic legal assessment changes according to the meaning attached to a practice.

Customary observance undertaken as social respect is analytically different from a belief that a month independently produces disaster. Comparative legal scholarship confirms that customary norms may operate alongside Islamic and state law, but their legitimacy must still be assessed according to the governing normative framework (Djun'astuti et al., 2022). Accordingly, the research gap concerns the internal differentiation of motives within a single living tradition. Previous studies often conclude either that Suro marriage is taboo in Javanese custom or that Islamic law permits it. This study instead examines how reverence, ancestral continuity, social harmony, and fear of misfortune coexist in community reasoning, then evaluates those meanings through Islamic law.

Roibin (2013) shows that Javanese wedding practices can display negotiated patterns between religious and cultural orientations, while Gramidia and Setyawan (2022) demonstrate that Suro traditions themselves are products of cultural acculturation. These perspectives support This

METHOD

This study employed descriptive field research with a qualitative approach. The research was conducted in Dalu X-A Village, Tanjung Morawa District, Deli Serdang Regency, North Sumatra, because the Javanese community there continues to avoid wedding ceremonies during Muharram or Suro. The study sought to describe the existing social reality and understand community attitudes, views, and behavior concerning the prohibition rather than quantify its prevalence. The research subjects were members of the Dalu X-A community who understood or continued to observe the tradition. Informants were selected purposively according to their relevance to the research focus. The criteria included customary leaders, community figures who still strongly maintained the tradition, and individuals willing to explain their views openly.

The number of informants was flexible and developed according to field needs. Data collection combined field research and library research. Field data were obtained through direct observation, interviews, and documentation. Observation was used to examine the social context in which the prohibition operated. Interviews followed prepared questions directed toward the research focus and were used to obtain explanations from relevant informants. Documentation included photographs, audio recordings, and field notes that supported and strengthened information obtained through interviews and observation. Library research was used to examine books, journal articles, research reports, and other written materials relevant to Javanese custom, marriage, Muharram, and Islamic law.

Data credibility was maintained through prolonged observation, increased research persistence, and triangulation. Source triangulation compared information from community, customary, and religious perspectives; technique triangulation compared interview data with observation and documentation; and time triangulation checked consistency through data

collection at different times. Analysis used qualitative content analysis with an Islamic jurisprudential perspective. The process involved data reduction, systematic narrative display, conclusion drawing, and continuing verification. Interview, observation, and documentary materials were categorized to identify themes underlying the Muharram marriage prohibition, after which

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Related studies in Deli Serdang and broader Muslim wedding contexts also illuminate cultural continuity and ritual adaptation (Ma'ruf et al., 2021; Riyani, 2019). Newer studies reinforce the persistence of the Suro taboo across settings (Mahargiani et al., 2026; Hartatiningsih et al., 2022; Andini et al., 2025). These studies provide an important comparative context for understanding that restrictions concerning marriage during Suro or Muharram are not isolated practices. Rather, they form part of a broader pattern of cultural continuity in which inherited Javanese understandings of sacred time continue to influence family decisions even within predominantly Muslim communities. The persistence of such traditions demonstrates that marriage is understood not only as a religious and legal institution but also as a cultural event surrounded by symbolic considerations, family expectations, and inherited perceptions of appropriate and inappropriate timing.

The field findings show that the prohibition against marriage during Muharram remains a living customary norm in Dalu X-A Village. The community is predominantly Muslim and Javanese cultural practices continue to influence major family events. The thesis reports that weddings during Muharram have effectively been avoided in the village because residents are reluctant to challenge an inherited prohibition. This avoidance indicates that the strength of the tradition does not depend on formal sanctions or written customary regulations. Instead, its authority derives from collective acceptance and the continuing willingness of families to reproduce inherited practices. Community members describe Suro as a sacred or “hot” month and some believe that violating the taboo may be followed by unwanted events such as marital conflict, divorce, unstable household finances, or other calamities.

The practice is therefore sustained not by a written customary rule but by intergenerational transmission, collective memory, and social caution. Parents and older community members transmit knowledge about the prohibition to younger generations, while previous family experiences and stories concerning misfortune strengthen perceptions that the tradition should not be ignored. In this way, customary authority operates socially rather than institutionally. Individuals may not necessarily possess a detailed explanation of the historical origin of the prohibition, yet they continue to observe it because it has become part of the community's established framework for making marriage decisions. This pattern resembles findings in Rumbai Jaya, where inherited perceptions of Suro as sacred continued to shape wedding decisions (Lestari et al., 2020), and in Ngampelrejo, where ancestral habit and anxiety about future harm encouraged avoidance (Prayitno & Ishaq, 2022).

However, the Dalu X-A findings reveal that fear is not the only meaning attached to the prohibition. Candra Irawan, identified in the thesis as a community figure, explained that Muharram is sacralized because it marks the transition of the year and is associated with purification. His explanation indicates that avoidance may also reflect an attitude of respect toward a period perceived as spiritually significant rather than simply fear of misfortune. Muhammad Yusuf, a customary figure, emphasized that the prohibition is inherited from earlier generations and is maintained as a form of respect for local wisdom and family harmony, while acknowledging that Islam itself does not establish a mandatory ban on marriage in a particular month. This acknowledgment is significant because it demonstrates that customary observance and Islamic legal judgment can coexist without necessarily being considered identical by community members.

Partinem added an important distinction: refraining from marriage to honor Muharram may be acceptable, whereas refraining because one believes that the month itself causes danger is not justified. These accounts show multiple layers of motivation operating within the same practice. The outward behavior may be identical—postponing a wedding until Muharram has ended—but the underlying reasoning can be fundamentally different. One family may postpone a wedding because of respect for elders, another because of social harmony, another because Muharram is regarded as a period for spiritual reflection, and another because of fear that marriage during the month will produce misfortune. Consequently, an Islamic legal analysis cannot evaluate the practice solely from its observable form. The intention, belief, and theological assumptions underlying the behavior must also be considered.

Similar complexity appears in studies of Suro ritual, where communal worship, remembrance, cultural identity, and efforts to avoid misfortune coexist (Siburian & Malau, 2018; Aryanti & Zafi, 2020). These multiple meanings illustrate the dynamic relationship between religion and culture in Javanese Muslim communities. A single tradition can contain elements of social solidarity, religious reflection, inherited cultural identity, and beliefs that require theological scrutiny. Therefore, categorizing the entire tradition as either completely Islamic or completely contrary to Islam would oversimplify the social reality documented in the field.

The persistence of the taboo also reflects the wider Javanese understanding of marriage as an event requiring careful social and symbolic preparation. The thesis describes other customary considerations, including weton calculations, family position, and inherited restrictions. Such practices indicate that wedding decisions are embedded in a cultural system concerned with compatibility, safety, lineage, and family continuity. Marriage is not perceived merely as an agreement between two individuals but as the union of families whose future stability must be carefully prepared. Consequently, decisions concerning time, compatibility, and customary requirements acquire considerable social significance.

Kholik (2019) notes that Javanese marriage myths arise partly from the strong desire to protect marital continuity, although that concern can become intertwined with mystical assumptions. Nafi'ah and Setyawan (2022) similarly demonstrate that weton calculations continue to influence marriage timing in contemporary Javanese communities. These studies help explain why the Muharram prohibition remains socially persuasive even among educated residents: it

functions not merely as an isolated superstition but as part of a broader inherited grammar for managing uncertainty surrounding marriage. Families naturally desire a harmonious, economically stable, and lasting household. Cultural calculations and temporal restrictions can therefore function psychologically and socially as mechanisms through which uncertainty about the future is managed.

From the perspective of Islamic law, however, the decisive finding is that no specific textual rule prohibits a marriage contract in Muharram. The thesis states that marriage may be performed at any time when its pillars and legal requirements are satisfied. This distinction establishes the normative boundary between cultural preference and religious prohibition. A community may prefer particular dates or avoid certain periods for social reasons, but such preferences cannot automatically acquire the status of Islamic legal commands or prohibitions without an appropriate religious basis.

Muharram is an honored month, but its religious honor does not create a prohibition on marriage. This conclusion is consistent with Mardiantari et al. (2022), who found no specific Qur'anic or Hadith basis for forbidding marriage in Muharram, and with Indiantoro et al. (2022), who distinguish Javanese customary prohibition from Islamic legal permission. Djun'astuti et al. (2022) also underline that marriage prohibitions must be identified according to the legal system from which they derive; customary restrictions cannot automatically be treated as Islamic prohibitions. These comparisons reinforce the importance of distinguishing between normative Islamic law and culturally constructed restrictions. The existence of a strongly respected tradition does not by itself transform that tradition into a binding rule of Islamic marriage law.

The more difficult issue is therefore not the validity of a Muharram marriage but the belief underlying avoidance. When residents postpone a wedding simply to respect family expectations, preserve social harmony, or devote Muharram to reflection, the act of postponement does not itself invalidate Islamic principles. Such decisions may represent social accommodation within family and community relationships. This is particularly relevant in marriage because family approval and harmonious relations between relatives can have practical consequences for the future household. Respecting a cultural preference may therefore have legitimate social purposes, provided that individuals do not believe that the preference constitutes an absolute divine prohibition.

Custom can organize social conduct so long as it does not transform a permissible act into a divinely prohibited one. Roibin (2013) demonstrates that Javanese wedding traditions frequently involve negotiated relations between religious commitments and cultural forms. Aziz (2017) likewise shows that Javanese marriage rituals may carry constructive ethical meanings concerning harmony, kinship, and preparation. These perspectives allow custom to be understood neither as automatically opposed to Islam nor as automatically legitimate merely because it has been inherited. Instead, each customary element needs to be examined according to its content, purpose, consequences, and relationship with Islamic principles.

The Dalu X-A case therefore requires a differentiated judgment: cultural form and religious belief cannot be assessed as though they were identical. The social act of postponing a marriage during Muharram can carry different legal and theological meanings depending on its underlying rationale. If postponement functions as cultural respect, consideration for parents, or an effort to preserve family harmony, it remains within the sphere of social custom. By contrast, the thesis explicitly criticizes the belief that violating the Muharram taboo necessarily produces bad luck or determines the future of the household. Partinem's interview associates such fear with *thiyarah*, namely attributing misfortune to an omen or temporal sign.

In the study's Islamic legal reasoning, calamity and household difficulties cannot be causally assigned to Muharram itself. Marriage conflict, economic difficulties, divorce, illness, and other problems cannot be religiously attributed to the month in which a marriage was performed without a valid basis. Nurdiani (2013) describes how Suro may be surrounded by beliefs concerning danger and protective ritual, illustrating the cultural background from which such causal assumptions can emerge. Jeni and Khairuddin (2024) similarly report that communities may continue to associate Muharram weddings with household breakdown despite the absence of an Islamic prohibition. The problem therefore arises not merely from observing a customary calendar but from assigning independent causal power to time in determining benefit or misfortune.

Thus, the normative problem arises when cultural caution becomes theological attribution. This distinction clarifies the role of custom in Islamic legal evaluation. A tradition may retain social value as inherited local wisdom, but its acceptability depends on whether its content contradicts fundamental religious principles. The Dalu X-A findings suggest two possible forms of the same local practice. The first is a culturally accommodative form, in which marriage is postponed during Muharram out of respect for inherited customs, parental considerations, community harmony, or the symbolic honor attached to the month. This form does not necessarily contradict Islamic law as long as the actors continue to recognize that marriage during Muharram remains legally permissible. The second is a theologically problematic form, in which Muharram is believed to possess an inherent capacity to cause marital failure, economic hardship, divorce, or other misfortune. In this form, the custom moves beyond social preference and becomes a religiously problematic causal belief.

The distinction between these two forms constitutes an important contribution of the study. Rather than simply classifying the prohibition as permissible or prohibited, the findings demonstrate that Islamic legal evaluation must examine the beliefs, intentions, and meanings attached to customary practice. The same outward decision to postpone a wedding can therefore receive a different assessment according to the reasoning that motivates it. This approach provides a more contextual interpretation of the relationship between Islamic law and Javanese local wisdom in Dalu X-A Village. It preserves culturally constructive elements such as respect for elders, family harmony, social solidarity, and appreciation of Muharram while critically separating them from beliefs that attribute misfortune to the month itself. The case ultimately illustrates that interaction between Islam and local tradition is not simply a conflict between religion and culture, but a continuous process of negotiation in which cultural practices may be maintained,

reinterpreted, or corrected according to their compatibility with Islamic legal and theological principles.

CONCLUSIONS

The study concludes that the prohibition of marriage during Muharram in Dalu X-A Village is maintained through a combination of inherited Javanese custom, reverence for the sacred character of Muharram, concern for family and customary harmony, and, among some residents, fear of misfortune. Community explanations are therefore not uniform. Customary leaders and residents may understand postponement as respect for ancestral practice and a period of spiritual reflection, while others connect violation of the taboo with marital conflict, economic difficulty, divorce, or calamity. Islamic law does not establish Muharram as a prohibited time for marriage. A marriage performed during this month remains permissible and valid when its required pillars and conditions are fulfilled. The critical issue lies in the belief attached to the custom. Respecting a social convention or choosing another month for reasons of harmony does not by itself contradict Islamic law, but attributing inherent harmful power or inevitable bad luck to Muharram is incompatible with the study's Islamic legal reasoning. The contribution of this research is the distinction between cultural observance and theological attribution within the same outward practice. This distinction allows local tradition to be evaluated contextually rather than rejected wholesale. Religious and customary leaders should therefore strengthen

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