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The Decline of Mabbarazanji: Customary Religious Practice in the Lens of Islamic Legal Philosophy

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Abstrak:

Penelitian ini mengkaji tradisi *Mabbarazanji* dalam prosesi pasca-akad perkawinan masyarakat Bugis di Kandiawang, Sulawesi Selatan, melalui perspektif falsafah hukum Islam. Sebagai praktik keagamaan yang berakar pada budaya lokal, *Mabbarazanji* tidak hanya mencerminkan ekspresi spiritual melalui pembacaan syair-syair pujian kepada Nabi Muhammad saw., tetapi juga berperan sebagai sarana penguatan identitas budaya dan kohesi sosial. Tujuan penelitian ini adalah untuk mengungkap bagaimana tradisi ini dijalankan, dipahami oleh masyarakat, dan diposisikan dalam kerangka 'urf (kebiasaan) dan *maqāsid al-sharī'ah* (tujuan hukum Islam). Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan desain studi lapangan. Pengumpulan data dilakukan melalui observasi partisipatif, wawancara semi-terstruktur dengan tokoh agama dan adat, serta dokumentasi ritual. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa *Mabbarazanji* dipandang sebagai kewajiban adat yang sakral dan sarat makna filosofis. Unsur simbolik seperti nasi ketan, pisang, dan telur mencerminkan nilai-nilai religius seperti kesetiaan, kebersamaan, dan ketahanan rumah tangga. Pembahasan menempatkan *Mabbarazanji* sebagai praktik 'urf yang sah dan tidak bertentangan dengan prinsip syariah. Meskipun menghadapi tantangan dari arus modernisasi dan pergeseran generasi, tradisi ini tetap memiliki legitimasi teologis dan relevansi sosial. Penelitian ini berkontribusi pada wacana integrasi antara adat lokal dan hukum Islam serta memperlihatkan bagaimana ritual keagamaan berbasis budaya dapat menjadi medium pelestarian nilai etis Islam di tengah perubahan zaman.

Kata Kunci: *Mabbarazanji*; tradisi pasca akad perkawinan; falsafah hukum Islam

Abstract

This study examines the *Mabbarazanji* tradition in post-wedding ceremonies within the Bugis community of Kandiawang, South Sulawesi, through the lens of Islamic legal philosophy. As a locally rooted religious practice, *Mabbarazanji* encapsulates collective recitations, symbolic offerings, and communal participation that transcend its ritualistic function to embody cultural identity and spiritual values. The research aims to explore how the tradition is

practiced, perceived by the community, and positioned within the framework of *'urf* (custom) and *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* (objectives of Islamic law). Employing a qualitative fieldwork design, data were gathered over two months through participant observation, semi-structured interviews with religious and cultural leaders, and documentation of the ceremony. Thematic analysis revealed that *Mabbarazanji* is not only considered a sacred obligation but also a medium for transmitting ethical values such as unity, loyalty, and gratitude. Symbolic items—such as sticky rice, bananas, and eggs—convey culturally embedded meanings that align with Islamic virtues. The discussion situates *Mabbarazanji* as a case of dynamic religious embodiment, where local tradition and Islamic legal principles coexist. While generational disengagement poses challenges to its continuity, the ritual's alignment with *sharī'ah* norms and its capacity to promote social cohesion underscore its theological and cultural legitimacy. This study contributes to the discourse on the integration of local customs within Islamic jurisprudence and highlights the role of vernacular ritual in preserving ethical traditions in the face of modern transformation.

Keyword: *Mabbarazanji*; Customary Religious Practice; Islamic Legal Philosophy

INTRODUCTION

Amid rapid social transformations, many sacred local traditions are increasingly marginalized by modern paradigms that prioritize efficiency, individualism, and cultural homogeneity. One such tradition is *Mabbarazanji*—the recitation of poetic praises to the Prophet Muhammad in post-wedding ceremonies—which remains deeply rooted in the Bugis community of Kandiawang, South Sulawesi. While it is locally perceived as a customary obligation (*adat*), this ritual also serves as a religious expression, a vehicle of spiritual continuity, and a tool for reinforcing communal bonds. In recent years, however, scholars have raised concerns about the declining observance of such rituals among younger generations, who face global cultural exposure and educational systems that rarely incorporate local spiritual traditions (Aljunied, 2016; Azra, 2020)

As highlighted in broader anthropological debates, rituals are not mere repetitions of inherited forms, but are sites of cultural negotiation and identity reproduction (Bell, 1991; Kabydenova & Rysbekova, 2016). The *Mabbarazanji* tradition thus deserves scholarly attention not only for its performative aspects, but for the moral and theological values it encapsulates. Unfortunately, prior research tends to treat this tradition descriptively—focusing on ceremonial stages, textual content, or sociocultural symbolism—without systematically engaging with the Islamic legal-philosophical framework that legitimizes its religious standing.

This study aims to fill that gap by exploring three interrelated questions: (1) How is *Mabbarazanji* performed and experienced within the Bugis community of Kandiawang? (2) How do local actors interpret its religious and cultural significance? and (3) How can this practice be positioned within the Islamic legal tradition—specifically under the doctrines of *'urf* (local custom) and *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* (the higher objectives of Islamic law)?

By approaching *Mabbarazanji* as a living tradition situated within the moral economy of Islam, this study contributes to the discourse on vernacular Islamic practices and highlights the dynamic interplay between ritual, cultural resilience, and legal normativity in contemporary Muslim societies (Feener & Sevea, 2009; Kamali, 2008).

Despite a growing body of literature on local Islamic expressions across Southeast Asia (Fauzia, 2017; Hooker, 2008; Laffan, 2011), few studies have examined how customary rituals are embedded in legal reasoning, particularly from within the epistemology of *fiqh* and its philosophical dimensions. This article thus positions *Mabbarazanji* not only as cultural heritage but as a normative site where Islamic legal consciousness is actively negotiated, expressed, and transmitted.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative fieldwork approach to examine the *Mabbarazanji* post-wedding tradition in Kandiawang, Sidenreng Rappang Regency, through the lens of Islamic legal philosophy. The research site was purposively selected due to the community's active observance of the tradition and the availability of knowledgeable religious and cultural figures. Data were collected over a two-month period using three primary methods: participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation of ritual practices. Observations focused on the actual performance of *Mabbarazanji*, while interviews were conducted with religious leaders, customary elders, and family members involved in the ceremonies. Supporting materials, such as manuscripts, symbolic items, and local narratives, were also documented.

Thematic analysis was used to interpret the data. This included a combination of deductive reasoning—drawing on Islamic legal principles—and inductive coding based on patterns emerging from the field. The analysis process followed the interactive model of data reduction, display, and conclusion drawing (Mallette & Saldaña, 2019)

All participants provided informed consent, and ethical considerations, including anonymity and respect for local customs, were strictly observed. This methodological framework enabled a nuanced understanding of *Mabbarazanji* as a lived cultural and religious practice embedded in Islamic legal reasoning.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

This study revealed a set of interrelated findings regarding the *Mabbarazanji* tradition as practiced in the Bugis community of Kandiawang. The findings are organized around three main dimensions: ritual practice, community perception, and embedded values.

Aspect	Key Findings
Ritual Sequence	Mabbarazanji is performed after the marriage contract as an expression of gratitude and blessing.
	The ceremony begins with the recitation of Al-Fātiḥah, followed by poetic praises to the Prophet.
	Traditional foods (nanre barazanji) are served as symbolic offerings.
	The ritual is led by an imam and involves the collective participation of family and community.
Social and Religious Perception	The tradition is viewed by most as a cultural obligation with spiritual value.
	Older generations maintain its sacred status, while younger people show decreasing participation.
	It is practiced not only in weddings but also in events like aqiqah and pilgrimages.
Symbolic and Philosophical Values	The foods used in the ceremony (e.g., bananas, sticky rice, eggs) carry symbolic meanings.
	The ritual emphasizes unity, prosperity, loyalty, and divine protection for the couple.
	Community leaders affirm that the practice aligns with Islamic principles and does not violate sharī'ah.

These findings are based on triangulated data from observations, in-depth interviews, and documentation. They reflect both the performative and symbolic dimensions of Mabbarazanji as preserved in the Kandiawang context.

Discussion

This study examined the Mabbarazanji tradition performed after wedding ceremonies among the Bugis community in Kandiawang. The findings revealed that the ritual continues to function as a communal expression of gratitude, spiritual devotion, and social identity. It is characterized by the recitation of Barzanji texts, symbolic food offerings, and collective participation involving religious leaders, elders, and family members. While widely regarded as a sacred obligation by older generations, the tradition shows signs of declining interest among younger community members (Raihani, 2014; Rosyad, 2020)

The persistence of Mabbarazanji in post-marital rites can be explained by its dual function: religious devotion and cultural cohesion. The ritual not only reaffirms the couple's spiritual orientation through prophetic praise but also strengthens family ties by facilitating shared responsibilities and blessings (Feener & Sevea, 2009). The symbolic elements—such as sticky rice (unity), bananas (loyalty), and eggs (resilience)—represent moral virtues that align with the communal ethics of Islam. However, generational disengagement appears to be driven by the absence of formal transmission, the growing influence of global media, and the reduction of ritual space in contemporary urban weddings (Nilan, 2021; Pepinsky et al., 2010).

Previous studies on Mabbarazanji have generally focused on textual analysis or sociocultural descriptions (Iqbaliqbal & Rahim, 2023; Miftakhuddin, 2016), with limited engagement in Islamic legal reasoning. In contrast, this study situates the tradition within the framework of 'urf and maqāṣid al-sharī'ah (Kamali, 2008; Salim, 2008) emphasizing its normative legitimacy within Islamic jurisprudence. This conceptual framing distinguishes the current research by addressing not only how the ritual is performed, but why it remains religiously valid and socially meaningful in a contemporary Muslim society (Prentice & Saeed, 2005).

The findings suggest that Mabbarazanji operates as a form of lived theology—a vernacular Islamic practice where law, ethics, and culture converge (Aljunied, 2016; Feener et al., 2015). It becomes a localized site of religious meaning-making where the community negotiates its spiritual obligations in culturally resonant forms. In the context of Kandiawang, the ritual affirms both religious identity and Bugis cultural distinctiveness, illustrating how Islamic law accommodates indigenous expressions without losing its normative integrity (Hooker, 2008; Van Bruinessen, 2013)

The erosion of intergenerational transmission raises questions about the sustainability of Mabbarazanji and other local Islamic rituals. On one hand, the tradition functions as a community stabilizer and moral transmitter (Laffan, 2011). On the other, its decreasing observance reveals vulnerabilities in cultural resilience when not institutionally supported. This duality mirrors the broader tension in Muslim societies between traditional authority and modern lifestyle changes (Abbasi, 2020; Pasha, 2000; Wilkinson, 2017).

The findings call for strategic interventions at both community and policy levels. Educational institutions, especially Islamic schools and pesantren, can integrate local traditions like Mabbarazanji into curricula as examples of 'urf shālih (valid custom) (Azra, 2020). Cultural institutions should document and digitize the ritual for broader access (Hennessy, 2012; Henningsen & Larsen, 2020; Manžuch, 2017; Siliutina et al., 2024), while local governments could include it in religious tourism programs that preserve cultural heritage and stimulate the local economy (Fonseca & Ramos, 2012; Hefner & Formichi, 2021; Junaid, 2014). These actions not only protect the tradition but reinforce the pluralism and adaptability of Islamic legal and cultural frameworks (Yilmaz, 2022).

CONCLUSION

This study has demonstrated that Mabbarazanji, as practiced by the Bugis community in Kandiawang, is not merely a ceremonial tradition but a site of religious embodiment, social cohesion, and cultural resilience. The findings reveal that the ritual maintains a meaningful position in post-wedding practices, combining recitations, symbolic food, and collective participation. Despite pressures from modernization and generational shifts, Mabbarazanji continues to be perceived as spiritually significant and morally binding. Its structure reflects deeply rooted values—unity, gratitude, resilience—that resonate with Islamic teachings while simultaneously preserving local identity. As such, the tradition represents a dynamic expression of lived Islam in the vernacular context.

Theoretically, this research contributes to the discourse on the integration of 'urf (custom) and Islamic legal norms by offering empirical evidence of how local rituals can align with maqāṣid al-sharī'ah. It affirms that cultural practices, when ethically grounded and theologically sound, serve as legitimate vehicles for transmitting religious values. The study also invites further research into the role of ritual in sustaining Islamic ethics within diverse cultural milieus, particularly under conditions of socio-religious change. Future studies may explore comparative analyses between regions or investigate models for revitalizing such traditions among youth through digital, educational, or policy-based interventions.

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