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The Transformation of the Mogigi Tradition in Kaili Marriage: Negotiating Custom and Islamic Law

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ABSTRACT:
Background: The Mogigi tradition is part of the Kaili traditional wedding tradition, which involves trimming the fine hairs, particularly around the eyebrows of the bride and groom. This practice is interesting to study because it intersects local traditions and Islamic norms regarding eyebrow shaving.
Aims: This study aims to analyze the implementation of the Mogigi tradition and explain the adaptation process between Kaili culture and Islamic law through the perspective of Islamic legal anthropology.
Methods: This research employed a qualitative approach with an empirical legal research design and an Islamic legal anthropology approach. Data were obtained through observation, interviews with traditional leaders, religious figures, traditional practitioners, and the Kaili community, and documentation. Data were analyzed descriptively and analytically, and their validity was strengthened through triangulation.
Result: Research shows that Mogigi has symbolic meaning as a form of self-purification and preparation for the bride and groom to enter a new life. This tradition has undergone a taghyir (adaptive-reconstructive) process, evident in changes in shaving techniques, orientation of intentions toward Allah SWT, and the use of Islamic readings during the ceremony.
Conclusion: Mogigi shows that Islamic customs and laws can interact through a process of adaptation and reconstruction of values without eliminating the cultural identity of the Kaili people.

Keywords: Mogigi; Kaili customary marriage; Islamic legal anthropology

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INTRODUCTION

Marriage in Muslim society is not only a social and legal relationship between a man and a woman, but also a religious institution that is intertwined with the values, identity and cultural practices of the community (Daumpung, 2022; Jamal et al., 2022; Lubis & Suhri, 2020). In the Kaili indigenous community, marriages are conducted in accordance with Islamic religious requirements and through a series of traditional ceremonies passed down from generation to generation. One such ceremony is Mogigi, the practice of shaving or trimming fine hairs (vulu cilaka) on the face, especially around the eyebrows, without altering the natural structure of the bride and groom's eyebrows. This tradition is not solely intended to enhance appearance, but also has symbolic meaning related to the process of self-purification, the willingness to leave behind past behaviors, and the readiness of the bride and groom to enter a new life. Therefore, the sustainability of Mogigi is important to study not only as an expression of local culture, but as an arena where traditional identity, religious beliefs, and Islamic law meet and shape the social practices of the Kaili community.

The problem arises when this customary practice comes into conflict with the normative provisions of Islam regarding al-nams, namely plucking or shaving eyebrow hair, which is prohibited in a number of hadiths (Adilah.H et al., 2025; Priwulan & Darta, 2025). Ideally, Muslim community practices are expected to be in accordance with sharia provisions, while in the social reality of the Kaili community, Mogigi is still maintained as part of traditional marriage ceremonies. This condition has resulted in different views within the community: some maintain Mogigi as a traditional heritage that has symbolic value, while others question it because it is considered to be in conflict with the prohibition on eyebrow shaving in Islamic law. However, the current practice of Mogigi is not entirely identical to eyebrow shaving as understood textually because shaving is done only to tidy fine hairs and does not change the original structure of the eyebrows. This gap between textual norms and cultural practices is what makes Mogigi relevant to study as a problem of the relationship between normative law and law that is alive in society.

The encounter between Islam and Kaili culture also opens up an important space for understanding how a tradition can undergo transformation when interacting with a religious value system. Islam developed in the Land of Kaili within a society that already had its own belief system, customs, and rituals. As it developed, elements of Mogigi associated with the old beliefs underwent changes. Traditional equipment, once interpreted as offerings to ancestral spirits, was later retained as a cultural symbol, while rituals began to be accompanied by the recitation of Bismillah , salawat (prayer), dhikr (remembrance of God), the shahada (the declaration of faith), and prayers addressed to God. This process demonstrates that the relationship between custom and Islam does not always occur through the elimination of one value system, but rather through reinterpretation, selection, and reconstruction of meaning (Haniyah, 2018; Soekanto, 2017). Thus, Mogigi offers an important empirical space to examine the ability of Islamic law to adapt to local cultures while maintaining its normative principles.

Previous studies have generally discussed eyebrow shaving from a normative Islamic perspective, but have not adequately explained how the practice is negotiated within an indigenous marriage tradition. Akbar, (2023) discussing the hadiths regarding the prohibition of shaving eyebrows, and Sholehuddin, (2016) discusses the practice of eyebrow embroidery from a hadith perspective. While these studies provide an important foundation for understanding the normative status of eyebrow waxing, their study focuses more on the text, beauty, and legal status of the act. There has been no study that specifically positions Mogigi as a legal and cultural practice of the Kaili people and analyzes the process of encounter between local traditions and Islamic law through the perspective of Islamic legal anthropology. Therefore, the novelty of this research lies in its effort to shift the analysis from the binary question of "permissible or not permissible" to an understanding

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of how Islamic norms and Kaili traditions are negotiated, reinterpreted, and reconstructed in the practice of Mogigi.

The anthropological perspective of Islamic law was chosen because the Mogigi issue cannot be adequately explained simply by comparing customary practices with the literal text of the law. This approach allows Islamic law to be understood not only as a set of norms but also as a system that operates within the social and cultural structures of society (Arbi et al., 2023; Ichsan et al., 2025) In this context, bayani reasoning which is based on text needs to be combined with ta'lili reasoning which takes into account the illat or ratio legis, the purpose of the law, and the socio-empirical conditions when a provision is applied (Mahyudi, 2023; Sumanto, 2018). The anthropological approach of Islamic law thus allows research to examine not only the form of shaving in Mogigi, but also the intent, symbols, beliefs, changes in meaning, and the social context behind the continuation of this tradition. This perspective is important to explain the adaptation process, which in the Mogigi context occurs in an adaptive-reconstructive (taghyir) manner, namely the acceptance of local cultural elements accompanied by modifications to elements deemed inconsistent with Islamic values. This process is evident, among other things, in the change in shaving that no longer changes the structure of the eyebrows and the shift in the orientation of the ritual from ancestral spirits to Allah SWT.

Based on these issues, this study aims to analyze the implementation of the Mogigi tradition in marriages among the Kaili indigenous people and explain this tradition from the perspective of Islamic legal anthropology. Theoretically, this study is expected to broaden the study of Islamic family law by demonstrating that the relationship between Islamic law and local customs is not always confrontational, but can occur through a process of negotiation, adaptation, and cultural reconstruction. This study also offers an understanding of Islamic law as a social practice that interacts with the legal culture of society without ignoring its normative foundations. Practically, this study is expected to provide a more proportional framework for understanding the community and customary leaders in seeing the difference between the normatively prohibited practice of eyebrow shaving and Mogigi as a symbolic practice that has undergone transformation in the Kaili Muslim community. Thus, this study contributes to the development of Islamic legal anthropology studies as well as to a more contextual understanding of the continuity of local traditions in the lives of Indonesian Muslims.

METHOD

Research Design

This study employs empirical legal research with a qualitative field research design. This approach was chosen to understand law not merely as a set of written norms, but as a social practice that is lived, implemented, and legitimized in society. Specifically, the study employs an Islamic legal anthropology approach to analyze two main aspects: the construction of Islamic law regarding the prohibition of eyebrow shaving and the procedures and philosophy of the Mogigi tradition in the Kaili indigenous community. With this approach, Islamic law is understood through the relationship between legal structure, legal substance, and the legal culture of the community. Field research was conducted in Besusu Barat Village, East Palu District, Palu City, because the characteristics of the Kaili community in that region are considered relevant to studying the adaptation process between Islamic law and local culture.

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Participants

The research participants consisted of individuals with knowledge, experience, or direct involvement with the Mogigi tradition and the traditional life of the Kaili people. They included the Head of the West Besusu Customary Council, the Secretary General of the Kaili Community Communication Forum, traditional elders who performed the Mogigi ritual, the bride and groom who underwent Mogigi, the parents of the bride and groom, members of the Kaili indigenous community who did not perform Mogigi, and religious leaders. The selection of a diverse group of participants was intended to obtain perspectives from traditional practitioners, recipients of the tradition, people who reject or do not practice the tradition, and those who understand the religious dimensions of the practice. Interviews were conducted separately to obtain a more in-depth understanding of the experiences and views of each informant.

Population and Sampling

The social scope of the research is the Kaili indigenous community related to the implementation of the Mogigi tradition in marriage, specifically those in the West Besusu region and the customary and religious stakeholder groups who understand the practice. Informants were selected based on the relevance of their knowledge and involvement in the phenomenon being studied. In the initial stage, researchers conducted observations in three regions, namely Tawaili, Besusu, and Pakuli, and obtained initial information from customary stakeholders regarding the characteristics of the Kaili community in each region. Based on these results, West Besusu was designated as the main research location. The researchers then used data from the East Palu District Religious Affairs Office to identify the location, time, and prospective couples who would be carrying out the marriage so that the Mogigi process could be directly observed.

Instrument

The primary instrument in this study is the researcher herself (the researcher as the primary instrument), as is characteristic of qualitative research. The researcher plays a direct role in conducting observations, interviews, documentation, data interpretation, and checking the accuracy of information from various sources. Supporting instruments include interview guidelines, field observation notes, interview recordings, photos and videos of the Mogigi implementation, marriage event data, historical documents of the Kaili community, books, journal articles, undergraduate theses, and literature related to Islamic law and the prohibition on eyebrow shaving. Primary sources are directed at field observations and interviews with traditional leaders, Mogigi practitioners, and religious leaders, while secondary sources are used to interpret the historical context, customs, and Islamic law.

The interview guidelines are open-ended so that questions can be developed according to the informant's answers.

Based on the interview topics documented in the research, sample questions include: (1) What are the reasons and objectives of the prospective bride and groom in carrying out the Mogigi tradition? (2) How is the implementation process and the meaning of each stage of Mogigi? (3) What is the meaning of shaving or trimming the hair around the eyebrows in this tradition? (4) How do people who carry out Mogigi understand the prohibition on eyebrow shaving in Islam? and (5) What are the reasons why some Kaili people choose not to carry out Mogigi? These topics are used to reveal the practical, symbolic, customary, and religious dimensions of the Mogigi tradition.

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Procedures and Time Frame

Data collection was conducted in several stages. First, researchers conducted preliminary observations in Tawaili, Besusu, and Pakuli to identify the characteristics of the Kaili indigenous community and determine the most appropriate location for the research focus. After West Besusu was designated as the primary location, researchers submitted a research letter to the village government and obtained marriage information from the East Palu District Religious Affairs Office. Second, researchers conducted direct observation of the implementation of the Mogigi tradition by recording, photographing, and recording the customary process. Third, interviews were conducted separately with traditional leaders, Mogigi practitioners, the bride and groom, the bride's family, members of the community who do not practice Mogigi, and religious leaders. Fourth, field data was supplemented with historical documents, lists of marriage events, interview recordings, photographs, videos, and literature related to Kaili customs and Islamic law.

Next, data from various techniques and sources were compared through triangulation. Based on interview notes in the original manuscript, most fieldwork took place in June–July 2021.

Analysis Plan

Data were analyzed using a descriptive-analytical approach through five stages. First, editing, which selects data relevant to the research objectives and separates it from unnecessary information. Second, classifying, which reduces and groups data based on patterns and research questions. Third, verifying, which re-examines the data, including comparing transcriptions with interview recordings to minimize errors. Fourth, analyzing, which interprets and compares interview data, observations, and documentation with the theoretical perspective used. Fifth, concluding, which formulates conclusions after all data has gone through the process of selection, classification, verification, and interpretation.

At the interpretation stage, empirical findings were analyzed using Symbolic Interpretivism Theory and the rules of Taghayyur al-fatwa wa ikhtilafuha bi hasbi taghayyur al-azminah wa al-amkinah wa al-ahwal wa al-niyyat wa al-'awa'id to explain the symbolic meaning of Mogigi as well as the possibility of changes and adaptations of Islamic law in the local cultural context. The credibility of interpretation is strengthened through triangulation, extended observations, continuous observation, and re-checking the suitability between interview results, observations, documentation and theoretical sources. With this procedure, the analysis not only determines the normative position of the Mogigi tradition, but also explains how the meanings, practices and values of Kaili customs interact and adapt to the principles of Islamic law.

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RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result

Observations and interviews show that Mogigi is a series of Kaili traditional wedding ceremonies that have a symbolic function and are still practiced in the community. Terminologically, Mogigi comes from the word mo, meaning to do, and gigi, meaning to shave. In practice, the shaving is not done by removing or changing the natural structure of the eyebrows, but rather by trimming the fine hairs around the eyebrows, face, hands, and feet of the prospective bride and groom. This tradition applies to both prospective grooms and brides and is generally carried out in the morning before the mokolontigi procession. The ceremony is carried out by elderly women who understand the Mogigi procedure and are believed to have good lineage and family life. Before the procession begins, a number of traditional equipment called jaka mpogigi is prepared, including sprouted coconuts, brown sugar, chicken eggs, rice, money, candles, water, white cloth, seleguri plants, and kamonji leaves. Although there are variations in the equipment among the Kaili Rai, Kaili Ledo, and Kaili Ado sub-ethnic groups, traditional symbols and values are the elements that unite the practice.

The Mogigi procession demonstrates a strong integration of Kaili traditional elements and Islamic religious expression. The traditional elders sit facing the bride and groom, then begin the procession by reciting Bismillahirrahmanirrahim (The Most Gracious and Merciful), expressing their intention or hope for a good life and offspring. A candle is twirled six times in front of the bride and groom's faces; three twirlings are performed while reciting salawat (prayer) and the other three twirlings are accompanied by dhikr (remembrance of God). Afterward, the fine hairs on the face, hands, and feet are trimmed while reciting the shahada (the declaration of faith). The procession concludes with the throwing of rice and the recitation of Alhamdulillahi rabbil 'alamin (Praise be to God, the Lord of the Worlds). Interview findings also indicate that there are no customary sanctions for brides and grooms who do not perform Mogigi. However, if a couple chooses to hold the entire Kaili traditional wedding ceremony, Mogigi is seen as a necessary customary symbol.

Table 1. Transformation of Mogigi Tradition Elements in the Process of Acculturation with Islam

Aspect	Before Acculturation	After Acculturation with Islam
Eyebrow shaving	Shaving is done by changing the natural structure of the eyebrows.	Shaving is limited to fine hairs and does not change the natural structure of the eyebrows.
Intention	The intention is to use the Kaili language and the request is addressed to the ancestral spirits.	The intention is to use Kaili/Indonesian language and the request is addressed to Allah SWT
Traditional reading	In the form of praise and hopes directed to ancestral spirits	Replaced with tasbih, tahmid, takbir, salawat Nabi, and shahada

Source: Adapted from field research results

The findings in Table 1 demonstrate that the continuation of Mogigi did not take place in a form completely identical to that practiced before the arrival of Islam. The most obvious changes were in the shaving method, the orientation of the intention, and the ritual recitations. Shaving, which previously altered the structure of the eyebrows, was modified to simply trimming the fine hairs without altering their original structure. The orientation of supplications also shifted from ancestral spirits to Allah SWT, while praise and traditional recitations previously addressed to ancestors were replaced by Islamic recitations. These data indicate a transformation of ritual elements without losing Mogigi's identity as a Kaili marriage tradition. In the original research paper, these changes

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were identified as the taghyir or adaptive-reconstructive process, namely the continuation of tradition through modification of certain elements after interaction with Islam.

The research also found two distinct perspectives among the Kaili community regarding Mogigi. Those who continue to practice the tradition view Mogigi as a form of respect for cultural heritage, a symbol of removing negative traits before entering into marriage, and a part of Kaili traditional identity. Conversely, some choose not to practice Mogigi because they understand the textual prohibition of eyebrow shaving in the Hadith and consider the practice potentially prohibited. Despite these differing views, observations indicate that the Mogigi practiced in the research context has undergone substantial changes compared to its original form. This tradition retains Kaili cultural symbols, but several elements of its rituals have been redirected toward Islamic values and expressions. Thus, the main research finding demonstrates that the Mogigi that persists in Kaili marriages is a tradition that has undergone a process of cultural-religious transformation, rather than a traditional practice that has been statically maintained from its pre-Islamic form.

Discussion

The research findings indicate that Mogigi cannot be understood simply as the practice of shaving hair around the eyebrows, but as a symbolic system that embodies the knowledge, values, hopes, and cultural identity of the Kaili people. This finding aligns with the theory of symbolic interpretivism, which views religion and culture as symbolic systems through which people construct and interpret the meaning of life (Kovačević et al., 2021; Zurvani & Zarei, 2024). In culture it can function as a model of reality and a system of meaning (Airoldi & Rokka, 2022; Haryani & Triyono, 2017). Mogigi, as a model of reality, represents the Kaili people's knowledge of beauty, cleanliness, and the symbol of vulu cilaka, which they believe must be removed before entering into married life. As a model for reality, the ritual embodies the hope that the bride and groom will abandon past bad behavior and enter into married life with willingness, fortitude, and goodness. As a system of meaning, various elements such as hair shaving, candles, water, rice, prayers, and jaka mpogigi serve as symbols that connect cultural knowledge with the values to be realized in married life.

The transformation of Mogigi after the spread of Islam in Kaili society also shows that tradition is not static. The shift in the orientation of prayers from ancestral spirits to Allah SWT, the replacement of traditional recitations with tasbih, tahmid, takbir, salawat, and the shahada, and the shift in shaving from an act of changing the shape of eyebrows to simply trimming fine hairs indicate a negotiation between tradition and religious norms. These findings can be explained through the concept of 'urf as proposed by Abdul Wahhab Khallaf, namely customs that have been recognized and continuously practiced by the community, both in the form of words and deeds (Athief, 2019; Kholidah, 2022; Putri, 2020). In ushul fiqh, customs can receive legal consideration as long as they do not conflict with the basic principles of sharia (Andriyadi, 2022; Janah, 2023). Thus, the existence of Mogigi cannot be judged solely based on the similarity of its external form to eyebrow shaving, but it is necessary to consider the purpose, method of implementation, meaning and changes in its elements. This explains why the Kaili people can maintain their traditional identity while making adjustments to religious demands.

This process becomes clearer when read through the principle of taghayyur al-fatwa wa ikhtilāfuha bi hasbi taghayyur al-azminah wa al-amkinah wa al-ahwāl wa al-niyyāt wa al-'awā'id, namely that fatwas can change and differ according to changes in time, place, circumstances, intentions and customs (Munira et al., 2024; Nugroho, 2016; Zaelani, 2020). This principle does not imply that normative texts can be ignored, but rather demonstrates the importance of context in understanding the application of a legal provision. The research paper emphasizes that the use of 'urf remains constrained by the basic principles of sharia. In the Mogigi context, the changing aspects are not only the time and social environment, but also the intention, the form of shaving, the orientation of prayer, and the function of the ritual. Therefore, the research findings demonstrate a taghyir or

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adaptive-reconstructive pattern, namely that a tradition is not completely eliminated, but is accepted with modifications to characteristics deemed inconsistent with Islamic teachings. The concept of taghyir within this research framework means maintaining certain cultural symbols or institutions while transforming their values and provisions to align with Islamic principles. The transformation of Mogigi from an orientation toward ancestors to an orientation toward Allah SWT is an empirical example of this process.

This finding also relates to the concepts of maslahah and maqāṣid al-sharī'ah. Al-Ghazali explained that the primary objective of sharia is directed at preserving religion, life, intellect, descendants, and property, while maslahah is related to the preservation of these objectives. In the transformed Mogigi, the symbolic value of the ritual is directed at the hope for a good household life, the character development of the bride and groom, the continuity of the family, and intergenerational connections without maintaining the ritual's orientation to ancestral spirits. This shows that the relationship between Islamic law and custom does not always have to be placed in a dichotomy of "accepted" or "rejected." From the perspective of Islamic legal anthropology, what is more important is identifying the cultural elements that are retained, those that are reconstructed, the underlying objectives, and their conformity with the basic principles of sharia. Thus, Mogigi shows that the Islamization of local culture can occur through a process of selection and reinterpretation of symbols, resulting in practices that simultaneously embody Kaili identity and Islamic expression. The original research results call this process adaptive-reconstructive which produces Mogigi with traditional symbols and Islamic values simultaneously.

Implications

The research findings imply that assessments of customary practices in Muslim societies need to consider their social context, purpose, symbolic meaning, and transformation processes, not just the similarity of an action's outward form to practices mentioned in normative texts. For the Kaili community and customary stakeholders, the sustainability of Mogigi can be directed at preserving cultural values that do not conflict with Islamic principles while strengthening documentation regarding the meaning of each symbol to prevent shifts in understanding between generations. For Islamic legal studies, these findings emphasize the importance of bringing together text-based bayani reasoning with ta'lili reasoning that considers 'illat, legal objectives, and socio-empirical phenomena. This approach is indeed one of the urgencies of Islamic legal anthropology emphasized in the original research.

Research Contribution

The main contribution of this research lies in the use of an Islamic legal anthropology perspective to explain Mogigi as a process of negotiation and reconstruction between Kaili customs and Islamic norms, rather than simply determining the legal status of eyebrow shaving. Theoretically, the research integrates Geertz's symbolic interpretivism, 'urf, the principle of fatwa change, taghyir, and maslahah to explain how cultural symbols can undergo religious reinterpretation. Empirically, the research demonstrates the concrete forms of this transformation through changes in shaving techniques, orientation of intentions, and ritual readings. Thus, the research expands the study of Islamic family law from a normative approach to an understanding of how Islamic law is actually lived, negotiated, and embodied in the cultural practices of local Muslim communities.

Limitations

The research primarily focuses on the Kaili community, primarily located in West Besusu. Therefore, the findings are contextual and do not necessarily represent all Kaili sub-ethnicities or regions. The research also employed a qualitative design, with informants selected based on their knowledge and involvement in Mogigi, and therefore does not aim to generate statistical generalizations. Furthermore, variations in jaka mpogigi between Kaili Rai, Kaili Ledo, and Kaili Ado have been identified in observations, but these variations have not been analyzed in depth through comparative analysis. Therefore, the research findings are best understood as an in-depth explanation of the process and meaning of Mogigi within the social context under study.

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Suggestions

Future research is recommended to expand the research location to various sub-ethnicities and regions of the Kaili community and conduct a comparative analysis of variations in the implementation, symbols, and religious acceptance of Mogigi. Comparative studies can also be conducted between Mogigi and similar traditions in other communities, such as the practice of eyebrow grooming in other regional wedding rituals, to test whether the adaptive-reconstructive patterns found in this study also occur in other local Muslim traditions. From a practical perspective, local governments and traditional institutions need to strengthen documentation of the processes, symbols, history, and transformations of Mogigi so that cultural preservation not only maintains the form of the ritual but also the understanding of its meaning. This recommendation to expand the research area and conduct comparative analysis is also in line with the suggestions contained in the original study.

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CONCLUSION

This research shows that the Mogigi tradition in Kaili indigenous weddings is a cultural practice with broader symbolic meaning than simply shaving or waxing the hair around the eyebrows. Mogigi is part of a series of traditional wedding ceremonies that represent a process of self-purification, letting go of past behaviors, and the readiness of the bride and groom to enter a new married life. The implementation involves various traditional symbols such as jaka mpogigi, candles, water, rice, and certain readings that have been adapted to Islamic values. In contemporary practice, shaving is carried out without changing the original structure of the eyebrows, while the orientation of the intention and ritual readings that were previously related to belief in ancestors are now directed to Allah SWT through the recitation of bismillah, dhikr, salawat, shahada, and Islamic prayers. These findings demonstrate that the Mogigi that persists today is not a static tradition, but rather a cultural practice that continues to undergo reinterpretation and transformation in the lives of the Kaili Muslim community.

From the perspective of Islamic legal anthropology, these changes indicate a taghyir or adaptive-reconstructive process, namely the acceptance of local cultural elements by modifying parts deemed inconsistent with basic Islamic principles. Through symbolic interpretivism, the concept of 'urf, the principle of legal change according to time, place, circumstances, intentions, and customs, and an orientation towards the benefit, this study shows that the relationship between custom and Islamic law is not always confrontational. Both can interact through a process of negotiation, selection, and reconstruction of values so that cultural identity is maintained without abandoning religious orientation. Thus, Mogigi provides an empirical picture of how Islamic law lives and adapts in society, while emphasizing the importance of an Islamic legal anthropology approach in understanding local traditions contextually, not only based on similarities in outward form with practices mentioned in normative texts.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

IR contributed to the conceptualization of the study, data collection and analysis, and drafting the manuscript. MT contributed to the development of the methodology, supervision, and review of the research substance. A. A contributed to the validation of the analysis, interpretation of the results, and critical revision of the manuscript. All authors read and approved the final version of the manuscript.

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