

**JAPA MANTRA AND OFFERINGS IN THE WALAGARA WEDDING  
TRADITION OF THE TENGGER TRIBE IN NGADAS VILLAGE,  
PONCOKUSUMO: A STUDY OF ISLAMIC LAW**

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**Abstract**

*The Walagara tradition in Tenggerese weddings in Ngadas Village, Malang Regency, is a form of local wisdom that serves as a customary legalization of marriage. This tradition involves two main elements: the recitation of mantras and the presentation of offerings, understood as a medium of spiritual communication with the gods, water maidens, and ancestral spirits to request safety and blessings for the bride and groom. This study aims to analyze the symbolic meaning of the Walagara tradition and its legal implications from an Islamic legal perspective through an 'urf' approach. The method used is qualitative-descriptive with Clifford Geertz's symbolic-interpretive analysis. The results indicate that the mantras serve as a spiritual medium, recited by traditional shamans in the ancient Tenggerese language, accompanied by offerings containing cosmological meaning. Although the Tenggerese Muslim community continues to participate in this tradition, interpreting it as a form of cultural respect, under Islamic law, this practice is categorized as 'urf fāsid' due to its potential to contain elements of polytheism. Therefore, a wise approach to da'wah is needed to ensure that cultural preservation remains in line with the principles of monotheism.*

*Keywords: Walagara, Japa Mantra, Offerings, Tengger Tribe, Islamic Law, 'Urf, Tradition*

**Abstrak**

*Tradisi Walagara dalam pernikahan masyarakat Tengger di Desa Ngadas, Kabupaten Malang, merupakan bentuk kearifan lokal yang berfungsi sebagai pengesahan pernikahan secara adat. Tradisi ini melibatkan dua elemen utama, yaitu pelafalan japa mantra dan penyajian sesajen, yang dipahami sebagai media komunikasi spiritual dengan dewa, dayang banyu, dan roh leluhur untuk memohon keselamatan dan keberkahan bagi pasangan pengantin. Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis makna simbolik tradisi Walagara serta implikasi hukumnya dalam perspektif hukum Islam melalui pendekatan 'urf. Metode yang digunakan adalah kualitatif-deskriptif dengan analisis simbolik-interpretatif ala Clifford Geertz. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa japa mantra berfungsi sebagai sarana spiritual yang diucapkan oleh dukun adat dalam bahasa Tengger kuno, disertai sesajen yang mengandung makna kosmologis. Meskipun masyarakat Muslim Tengger tetap berpartisipasi dengan memaknai tradisi ini sebagai penghormatan budaya, dalam hukum Islam praktik tersebut dikategorikan sebagai 'urf fāsid karena berpotensi mengandung unsur syirik. Oleh karena itu, diperlukan pendekatan dakwah yang bijak agar pelestarian budaya tetap selaras dengan prinsip tauhid.*

*Kata kunci: Walagara, Japa Mantra, Sesajen, Suku Tengger, Hukum Islam, 'Urf, Tradisi*



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## INTRODUCTION

Marriage in the Tenggerese community, particularly in Ngadas Village, is not simply a bond between two individuals but also a ritual steeped in profound cultural and spiritual values. The Walagara tradition, a form of traditional marriage, involves two essential elements: mantra chanting and offerings. Mantra chanting is a series of prayers recited by a traditional shaman, while offerings consist of various offerings symbolizing gratitude and respect for ancestors and supernatural powers. In this context, this study aims to explore how these practices interact with Islamic law and the values embraced by the community.

In Tengger society, marriage is not merely the union of two people, but also a crucial moment connecting past generations with the present. This tradition reflects a long-standing cultural richness and is an integral part of Tenggerese identity. This research hopes to shed more light on how the practice of mantra chanting and offerings serves not only as a ritual but also as a medium for preserving cultural values rooted in the community's traditions.

This study aims to explore the Walagara tradition, not only as a valuable cultural heritage, but also as a tool to strengthen community identity and build constructive interfaith dialogue. Using an Islamic legal approach, this study focuses on analyzing how the Tenggerese people have managed to maintain their traditional marriage practices while still adhering to the applicable sharia principles. Based on this background, the author is interested in raising an interesting theme, namely: "Japa Mantra and Sesajen in the Walagara Wedding Tradition of the Tengger Tribe in Ngadas Village, Poncokusumo: A Study of Islamic Law."

## RESEARCH METHODS

This research adopts a qualitative approach with a focus on field research that is juridical-empirical in nature.<sup>1</sup> The main objective of this study is to explore the symbolic meanings contained in the Walagara tradition adhered to by the Tengger people and to analyze the harmony of this tradition with the principles of Islamic law through the perspective of 'urf. The data collection process was carried out through direct participation, participant observation, and in-depth interviews with various figures, including traditional leaders, religious leaders, and cultural practitioners, as well as through documentation including photographs, videos, and ritual manuscripts.<sup>2</sup> This research was conducted in Ngadas Village, located in Poncokusumo District, Malang Regency. This village is known for its religious diversity and the Tenggerese people's efforts to preserve the Walagara tradition, including its Muslim community, who actively participate in various traditional ceremonies. The primary data used in this study were obtained

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<sup>1</sup> Lexy J. Moleong, *Metodologi Penelitian Kualitatif* (PT Remaja Rosdakarya, 2018).

<sup>2</sup> Sugiyono, *Metode Penelitian Kuantitatif, Kualitatif, Dan R&D* (Alfabeta, 2022).

from observations, interviews, and documentation conducted in the field,<sup>3</sup> while secondary data was collected from Islamic literature and other written sources. Data analysis was conducted descriptively and qualitatively, following the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The approach used in this analysis refers to the symbolic-interpretive method proposed by Clifford Geertz and the theory of 'urf in the context of Islamic law. To ensure data validity, the researcher applied triangulation techniques, member checking, and systematic documentation, thus ensuring the transferability, dependability, and confirmability of the collected information.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Mantra Japa Practice in Walagara Tradition

Mantra chanting in the Walagara tradition of Ngadas Village serves as a means of spiritual communication between the married couple and their ancestors and supernatural powers. This process is conducted by a traditional shaman who recites specific mantras rich in meaning and symbolism. According to research by Hasyim et al. (2020), mantra chanting is not merely a ritual but also an expression of hope for blessings and protection from ancestral spirits.<sup>4</sup> In this context, mantra chanting becomes an important symbol that reflects society's relationship with the spiritual world.

From observations, mantra chanting often contains local terms that may be difficult for younger generations to understand. This creates a gap in understanding between the older generation, who have direct experience with the spiritual meaning of the mantra, and the younger generation, who are more influenced by modernity. For example, a traditional shaman explained that the use of certain mantra chanting is closely related to natural cycles and agriculture, which is very relevant to the lives of the agrarian Tenggerese people. This suggests that mantra chanting serves not only as a spiritual tool but also as a reminder of the traditional values that bind the community to their environment.<sup>5</sup>

Furthermore, Japa Mantra is often accompanied by specific movements or rituals that deepen the meaning of each recitation. For example, when a traditional shaman chants a mantra, family members and guests in attendance typically participate in specific movements, such as raising their hands or praying together, creating a collective atmosphere that strengthens the sense

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<sup>3</sup> Hardani et al., *Buku Metode Penelitian Kualitatif* (2020).

<sup>4</sup> M. F. Hasyim et al., "The Walagara Marriage Ritual: The Negotiation Between Islamic Law and Custom in Tengger," *Journal of Indonesian Islam* 14, no. 1 (2020): 139–62, <https://doi.org/10.15642/JIIS.2020.14.1.139-162>.

<sup>5</sup> Melinda Fauziyah Putri, "Adat Walagara Perkawinan Masyarakat Suku Tengger Probolinggo Berbasis Transendental," *Prosiding Seminar Nasional Program Doktor Ilmu Hukum*, 2024.

of togetherness. This process not only strengthens the bond between the married couple but also between the families and communities in attendance, creating stronger social bonds.

### **The Meaning of Offerings in the Walagara Tradition**

The offerings presented in the Walagara tradition consist of various elements, such as food, flowers, and incense, each with deep symbolic meaning. The Tenggerese believe these offerings honor the spirits of their ancestors and the gods, who are considered important in their lives. For example, the tumpeng (rice cone) served symbolizes gratitude for abundant crops, while jasmine flowers are often chosen to symbolize purity and love. Each element of the offerings has its own story and meaning, demonstrating the community's deep appreciation for this tradition.

The practice of presenting offerings is not merely a physical act, but also an expression of gratitude and respect for the spirits believed to play a role in daily life. For example, during the Walagara ceremony, offerings are placed in sacred places, hoping that these spirits will provide protection or blessings. This demonstrates that offerings serve as a symbol of hope for a smooth and happy married life.

In some cases, offerings also reflect the social and economic values of the Tenggerese people. For example, the types of food served in a wedding offering often reflect the social status of the family hosting the wedding. Wealthier families may serve a wider variety of foods, while those of lower incomes may choose a more limited selection. This creates an interesting social dynamic, where the offerings serve not only as spiritual offerings but also as a reflection of the community's socioeconomic status.

### **Islamic Legal Review of the Practice of Japa Mantra and Offerings**

From an Islamic legal perspective, the practice of Japa Mantra and offerings in the Walagara tradition presents a complex theological dilemma. As a religion that emphasizes monotheism, Islam emphasizes that all forms of worship and supplication should be directed solely to Allah SWT. Therefore, reciting mantras that lack a clear meaning and offering offerings to other than Allah can be considered shirk, a major sin that can hinder a person's divine mercy.<sup>6</sup>

However, such practices cannot be separated from the local cultural context of the Tenggerese people. For them, rituals and offerings hold important symbolic meaning for maintaining the balance of the cosmos, nature, and social life. In fact, recent research shows that ritual practices in Tengger are not only related to beliefs but also serve as a means of maintaining ecological balance and strengthening the community's collective identity. Thus, for the Tenggerese,

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<sup>6</sup> Harun Nasution, *Teologi Islam: Aliran-Aliran, Sejarah, Analisa Perbandingan* (UI Press, 1986).

rituals such as mantra chanting and offerings are not only considered forms of worship but also as cultural expressions passed down from generation to generation.<sup>7</sup>

In Islamic law, there is room for accepting local traditions as long as they do not conflict with the qath'i texts. This principle allows for community traditions to persist, as long as they are not viewed as forms of worship that violate the principles of monotheism.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, a dialogical and educational approach is crucial for society to understand the differences between cultural expressions and Islamic teachings. In this way, centuries-old traditions can be appreciated while being guided to align with Islamic values.<sup>9</sup>

The Walagara tradition, performed during the Tenggerese wedding procession in Ngadas Village, Poncokusumo District, Malang Regency, is part of the local cultural heritage that contains two main components: Japa Mantra and offerings. This tradition is believed to have spiritual power and serves as a means to seek blessings from ancestors, bring blessings, and ward off disaster. This practice has been carried out for generations and has become an integral part of the socio-cultural identity of the local community. However, from an Islamic legal perspective, this tradition requires in-depth study using the concepts of 'urf (custom) and maqāṣid al-sharī'ah (objectives of sharia).

In Islamic jurisprudence (ushul fiqh), 'urf can be used as a secondary source of Islamic law, provided it does not contradict the established Islamic texts. According to Abdul Wahab Khallaf, 'urf is widely utilized by mujtahid scholars in the process of deriving and establishing Islamic law. Scholars who support the application of al-urf as a method for establishing law argue based on several verses in the Qur'an:<sup>10</sup>

حُذِ الْعَفْوَ وَأْمُرْ بِالْعُرْفِ وَأَعْرِضْ عَنِ الْجَاهِلِينَ

Translation

*Be forgiving, command (people) to the wise, and turn away from the foolish.*

كُنْتُمْ خَيْرَ أُمَّةٍ أُخْرِجَتْ لِلنَّاسِ تَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَتَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَتُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ

Ministry of Religion Translation 2019

*You (Muslims) are the best people born to humans (as long as) you order (do) what is right, forbid what is wrong, and believe in Allah.*

The rules of fiqh state:

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<sup>7</sup> Refki Rusyadi and Anisa Fitriyani, *Harmoni Kebudayaan: Satu Tinjauan Etnografi Masyarakat Suku Tengger* (Mata Kata Inspirasi, 2024).

<sup>8</sup> H. A. Djazuli, *Kaedah-Kaedah Fikih: Kaidah-Kaidah Hukum Islam Dalam Menyelesaikan Masalah-Masalah Yang Praktis* (Kencana, 2006).

<sup>9</sup> Ketut Wirata, *Kehidupan Masyarakat Hukum Adat Suku Tengger Sekitar Gunung Bromo* (Genta Publishing, 2023).

<sup>10</sup> A. Miswanto, *Ushul Fiqh: Metode Ijtihad Hukum Islam* (2019).

"customs can become laws."<sup>11</sup>

Based on this principle, customs such as Walagara can be categorized as 'urf ṣaḥīḥ (valid customs) if they do not violate the basic principles of Islam, especially in terms of faith. Customs that do not conflict with the Qur'an and Sunnah can be accepted as part of Islamic law, because Islamic law is flexible in accommodating local values as long as they do not deviate from monotheism.

The rules of Islamic jurisprudence play a very important and strategic role in the process of forming Islamic law, including in the analysis of social practices and community traditions, because they function to simplify the understanding of law by reducing complex branch rules into more easily understood general principles. In addition, the rules of Islamic jurisprudence serve as guidelines in contemporary ijtihad, especially when the text of the text does not directly regulate new problems that arise, while also increasing the efficiency of legal learning because students can understand the basic principles without having to memorize all the details of branch laws. In the structure of sharia science, the position of the rules of Islamic jurisprudence is very significant as a bridge connecting theoretical ushul fiqh with more applicable fiqh, born from the process of extracting texts, analyzing maqasid al-shari'ah, and studying historical and social contexts. For example, the principle of al-yaqin la yazul bi al-shakk provides legal certainty, while the principle of al-adah muḥakkamah indicates that local customs can be recognized as long as they do not conflict with sharia, and the principles of fiqh also reflect Islamic moral values such as justice, benefit, and convenience; for example, the principle of al-mashaqqah tajlib al-taysir emphasizes that in difficult situations, sharia provides convenience for its people.<sup>12</sup> Thus, the rules of fiqh not only function as a tool for understanding and applying Islamic law, but also as a reflection of moral and ethical values that can be applied in everyday life, showing that Islamic law is adaptive and responsive to social dynamics, so that it is relevant in the modern context that demands an innovative and solution-oriented legal approach.<sup>13</sup>

In the Walagara tradition of the Tengger people, the principles of Islamic jurisprudence, particularly the principle of ḍararu yuzāl (ضَرَرٌ يُزَالُ), serve as a very important guideline. The Walagara wedding ceremony, which includes Japa Mantra and offerings, has profound cultural value, but some of its practices can cause harm from a sharia perspective. The principle of ḍararu yuzāl emphasizes that all forms of harm or loss must be prevented and eliminated as much as

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<sup>11</sup> Miswanto, *Ushul Fiqh: Metode Ijtihad Hukum Islam*.

<sup>12</sup> Bahrudin, "Ilmu Ushul Fiqh," *Journal of Chemical Information and Modeling* 53, no. 9 (2019).

<sup>13</sup> Amir Syarifuddin, *Ushul Fiqh* (Kencana, 2014).

possible, including in cultural rituals that contain non-Islamic elements.<sup>14</sup> Etymologically, al-darar refers to something that does not provide benefits and can actually harm other people. This principle applies broadly, including the protection of al-daruriyyat al-khams: religion, soul, mind, lineage, property and honor.<sup>15</sup>

Some derivatives of the *ḍararu yuzāl* rules that can be applied in Walagara practice include:

الضَّرَرُ يُدْفَعُ عَلَى قَدْرِ الْإِمْكَانِ

Any harm arising from Walagara practices, such as rituals that contradict Islamic beliefs, must be minimized as much as possible. For example, if certain mantra chants contain elements of shirk (polytheism), educational approaches and ritual modifications can be implemented without completely eradicating the cultural practice, thus preserving its historical and symbolic value.

الضَّرَرُ لَا يُزَالُ بِمِثْلِهِ

Disadvantages must not be overcome by causing equal or greater harm. For example, forcibly banning all Walagara processions can cause social resistance or conflict within the community, so persuasive, educational or ritual diversion approaches are more appropriate to avoid greater social harm.

ارْتِكَابُ أَحْفَ الضَّرَرَيْنِ

If Walagara's practice contains elements that need to be adjusted, and both options cause harm, then the rule of choosing the lighter harm is applied. For example, maintaining cultural symbols (such as traditional clothing or dance processions) without carrying out rituals that conflict with Shari'a is considered the solution with the lightest impact.

يُحْتَمَلُ الضَّرَرُ الْخَاصُّ لِدَفْعِ الضَّرَرِ الْعَامِّ

This principle emphasizes that individual harm can be tolerated to prevent wider harm to the community. For example, a homeowner with a slanted wall is required to repair it, even if it costs money, to prevent disturbing neighbors. This principle can be analogized with adjusting the Walagara ritual to avoid negative impacts on the wider community.

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<sup>14</sup> Hasyim et al., "The Walagara Marriage Ritual: The Negotiation Between Islamic Law and Custom in Tengger."

<sup>15</sup> Ahmad Sarwat, *Kaidah-Kaidah Fikih* (Rumah Fiqih Publishing, 2018).

## دَرْءُ الْمَفَاسِدِ مُقَدَّمٌ عَلَى جَلْبِ الْمَصَالِحِ

Preventing harm must take precedence over achieving benefit. In Walagara practice, if a ritual element has the potential to harm Islamic faith or fundamental values, it must be modified or removed, even if this means reducing social or symbolic benefit. For example, the chanting of non-Islamic mantras can be replaced with Islamic prayers that maintain the spiritual meaning of a wedding ritual.

However, observations and interviews indicate that the practice of Japa Mantra and offerings in the Walagara tradition is not only interpreted as a cultural symbol, but also accompanied by the belief that ancestral spirits, supernatural beings, and supernatural powers have a significant influence on determining the success of marriage and family life. This represents a clear deviation from Islamic faith that contradicts the principle of monotheism (taqhid) in Islam.

Allah SWT says in the Qur'an:

وَلَا تَدْعُ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ مَا لَا يَنْفَعُكَ وَلَا يَضُرُّكَ فَإِنْ فَعَلْتَ فَإِنَّكَ إِذَا مِنْ الظَّالِمِينَ

*"And do not call on anything other than Allah, which does not benefit you and does not harm you. If you do (that), then indeed you are one of the wrongdoers." (QS. Yunus: 106)*

This verse strictly prohibits associating partners with Allah, including in the form of supplication or seeking blessings from anyone other than Him. Therefore, when the Walagara tradition includes elements of supplication to ancestors, gods, or spirits, the practice can be categorized as 'urf fāsīd (corrupt custom) and cannot be used as a legal basis in Islam.

From the perspective of maqāsid al-sharī'ah, the Shari'a aims to safeguard five main things: religion (ḥifẓ al-dīn), soul (ḥifẓ al-nafs), reason (ḥifẓ al-'aql), lineage (ḥifẓ al-nasl), and property (ḥifẓ al-māl).<sup>16</sup> If a cultural practice has the potential to damage the purity of the faith and lead to shirk, then this is contrary to the first maqasid, namely the protection of religion. Allah SWT confirms in Surah Al-Fatihah verse 5:

إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ

*"Only You do we worship and only You do we ask for help." (QS. Al-Fatihah: 5)<sup>17</sup>*

Economic aspects are also an important consideration in this analysis. The Walagara tradition requires the provision of substantial offerings, performed twice at the homes of the bride and groom. This places a significant financial burden on some communities. When this becomes a

<sup>16</sup> Jasser Auda, *Maqasid Al-Shariah: A Beginner's Guide* (International Institute of Islamic Thought, 2008).

<sup>17</sup> Departemen Agama RI, *Al-Qur'an Dan Terjemahannya* (Lajnah Pentashihan Mushaf Al-Qur'an, 2005).



customary obligation not based on Islamic law, it can lead to social and spiritual distress. In Islam, all offerings must be directed solely to God. Allah SWT says:

فَصَلِّ لِرَبِّكَ وَأَنْحَرْ

*"So establish prayer for your Lord, and sacrifice (only to Him)." (QS. Al-Kautsar: 2)<sup>18</sup>*

Field findings indicate three main deviations in the implementation of Walagara: (1) the belief that beings other than Allah have the power to bestow blessings; (2) the use of offerings as a medium for spiritual sacrifice; and (3) the fear of supernatural sanctions if the tradition is not carried out. All of these beliefs contradict the principle of monotheism, which is the foundation of Islamic teachings. It is narrated that 'Abdullah bin Mas'ud RA said:

ما رآه المسلمون حسناً فهو عند الله حسن، وما رآه المسلمون سيئاً فهو عند الله سيئ

*"What is considered good by Muslims is also good in the sight of Allah. And what is considered bad by Muslims is also bad in the sight of Allah." (HR. Ahmad)*

Thus, a wise educational and preaching approach is needed that emphasizes the importance of purifying faith while preserving culture. Islam does not reject local culture as long as it does not conflict with the principles of monotheism. Therefore, ongoing development is necessary to enable the community to distinguish between cultural values with historical value and ritual elements that could potentially tarnish the purity of faith.

### **Community Response to Walagara Practices**

This phenomenon becomes even more interesting when we consider that the Ngadas community comprises diverse religious backgrounds, including Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism. This creates a unique social dynamic, where Muslims in the village continue to participate in the Walagara tradition, including the use of mantra chanting and offerings. This involvement demonstrates the rich interaction between different traditions and beliefs and creates space for interfaith dialogue.

Survey statistics show that approximately 65% of respondents in Ngadas Village feel that the Walagara tradition does not interfere with their faith. This indicates a fairly good understanding among the community about how to interweave tradition with religious teachings. However, approximately 35% also expressed doubt and concern that their involvement in the practice could potentially diminish their faith. Openness to discuss these concerns is crucial, as it can create space for constructive dialogue between tradition and religious beliefs.

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<sup>18</sup> Departemen Agama RI, *Al-Qur'an Dan Terjemahannya*.

This interfaith dialogue is not limited to discussions about Walagara practices, but also encompasses a broader understanding of how each religion can respect and learn from each other. Initiatives to hold interfaith meetings in villages, where communities can share their views and experiences, can be a positive step in strengthening intercommunity ties.

### **The Approach to Da'wah in the Context of the Walagara Tradition**

In order to create a solid conceptual framework, a wise da'wah approach is needed to ensure that cultural preservation remains aligned with the principles of monotheism. This approach can be implemented through open dialogue, seminars, or outreach programs that explain the importance of upholding the faith and how to preserve culture without violating Islamic principles. With the right approach, it is hoped that the community can find a balance between cultural preservation and the correct practice of Islamic teachings.

The importance of contextual religious education cannot be overstated. Through relevant and societal-appropriate teaching, the younger generation can better understand the place of tradition within a religious context. This way, they will not only appreciate cultural heritage but also be able to integrate it with true Islamic teachings. This is a crucial step in ensuring that spiritual and cultural values do not conflict, but rather complement each other.<sup>19</sup>

### **CONCLUSION**

Based on the study on "Japa Mantra and Sesajen in the Walagara Wedding Tradition of the Tengger Tribe in Ngadas Village, Poncokusumo: A Study of Islamic Law", several important conclusions can be drawn. First, the Walagara tradition is an important element in the culture of the Tengger Tribe, passed down from generation to generation, with japa mantra and sesajen as the main components. Second, the practice of japa mantra and sesajen in this tradition is classified as 'urf fāsid' in Islamic law, because it contains elements that contradict the principle of monotheism. Third, the importance of a wise da'wah approach in bridging cultural preservation with Islamic principles, so that the community can respect local traditions without sacrificing faith. Thus, it is hoped that the community can continue to practice their traditions in a way that is in accordance with religious teachings, creating harmony between culture and spirituality.

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<sup>19</sup> Aulia Isnaeni Fariski and Nurul Ratnawati, "Eksistensi Tradisi Pernikahan Walagara Di Desa Sapikerep Kabupaten Probolinggo," *Jurnal Integrasi Dan Harmoni Inovatif Ilmu-Ilmu Sosial* 4, no. 1 (2023): 71–87, <https://doi.org/10.17977/um063v4i1p71-87>.

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