

## **The Integration of Fiqh and Customary Values in Malay Riau Marriage Practices: An Islamic Social Ethics Perspective**

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### **Abstract**

The traditional marriage ceremony of the Malay Riau community reflects a harmonious integration between Islamic jurisprudence (fiqh) and deeply rooted local customs. In practice, marriage is not merely a legal or emotional union, but a social and moral institution that embodies respect, honor, and collective responsibility. This study aims to explore how Islamic legal values are incorporated into the customary system of Malay Riau marriage and how this integration represents a balance between religious norms and cultural identity. Using a qualitative descriptive approach through literature review and field observation, this research reveals that essential fiqh principles—such as intention (niyyah), marriage contract (ijab qabul), and mutual responsibility between spouses—are expressed in local rituals and symbols that uphold Islamic law. The integration between fiqh and adat demonstrates that Malay traditions do not contradict Islam; instead, they enrich its social and ethical meaning in daily life. Consequently, the Malay Riau marriage tradition serves as a living example of how Islamic law and local wisdom can synergize to strengthen social ethics and sustain Islamic values within the community.

**Keywords:** Islamic Family Ethics; Fiqh and Custom; Malay Riau Marriage; Social Ethics; Local Wisdom

### **Introduction**

#### **Background**

The Riau Malay community, located in the central region of Sumatra, represents one of the most distinct cultural expressions of Islamic civilization in the Malay world. Historically, Riau served as a major hub of Islamic scholarship and Malay identity, where the spread of Islam was not merely a process of religious conversion but also a transformation of cultural and social norms (Azra, 2017). This synthesis of religion and culture has produced a unique socio-cultural landscape in which Islamic teachings and local traditions coexist in a mutually reinforcing relationship (Hooker, 2008). The Riau Malays continue to express their religiosity through

ritual, language, and social conduct that reflect both Islamic values and indigenous wisdom (*kearifan lokal*) (Taufik, 2019).

Marriage (*pernikahan*) holds profound significance in both Islamic and Malay cultural perspectives. In Islam, marriage is regarded as a sacred covenant (*'aqd al-nikah*) aimed at achieving harmony, compassion, and mercy within the family unit (*sakinah, mawaddah, wa rahmah*) (Al-Qaradawi, 1998). Beyond its legal dimension, Islamic marriage serves as an ethical framework for building moral society through mutual responsibility, justice, and emotional balance (Kamali, 2008). In the Riau Malay context, marriage extends beyond personal or familial ties—it embodies communal values such as social cohesion, collective dignity, and respect for kinship networks (Effendy, 2015). The ceremonial aspects of marriage, including *merisik, meminang, berinai, and beradat*, represent cultural expressions of Islamic ethical ideals adapted into local practice (Yusof, 2016).

The guiding principle of Riau Malay society—“*adat bersendi syarak, syarak bersendi Kitabullah*”—serves as a philosophical foundation for the integration of Islamic law (*fiqh*) and local custom (*adat*) (Rahim, 2018). This maxim affirms that custom derives its legitimacy from the Sharia, and that the Sharia itself is based on divine revelation in the Qur'an. In essence, *adat* and *syarak* are not seen as opposing forces but as complementary systems of moral and social regulation. Such integration reflects the broader Islamic legal philosophy of *'urf* (custom) as a valid source of law when it aligns with the objectives of Sharia (*maqasid al-shariah*) (Hallaq, 2009). Consequently, Riau Malay marriage practices exemplify a living model of Islamic social ethics in which religious norms are contextualized within local traditions without compromising their theological integrity.

### Literature Review

Studies on the relationship between *fiqh* and *adat* within Malay societies have shown that Islamic law and local custom are not inherently contradictory but rather mutually adaptive in shaping social and moral order. Classical Islamic jurists recognized the role of *'urf* (custom) as a valid source of law, provided that it does not contradict the Qur'an and Sunnah (Hallaq, 2009). This principle allowed Islamic law to interact dynamically with local traditions across different regions, including the Malay world, where Islam was introduced through gradual cultural accommodation rather than legal imposition (Hooker, 2008).

Several historical studies emphasize that the Islamization of the Malay Archipelago was characterized by the integration of Sharia with pre-Islamic norms through a process of cultural negotiation (Azra, 2017). According to Azra, this synthesis formed the foundation of what later became known as the “*adat bersendi syarak, syarak bersendi Kitabullah*” philosophy—a doctrinal statement legitimizing custom within the moral framework of Islamic revelation.

Hooker (2008) further explains that *adat law* in Indonesia evolved as a hybrid system, balancing community-based ethics with the normative dimensions of Islamic jurisprudence. The result is a distinctive legal culture where local social harmony (*muafakat*) and Islamic ethics coexist in complementary ways (Effendy, 2015).

Contemporary Islamic scholars also support the compatibility of Sharia with contextual customs. Al-Qaradawi (1998) argues that the flexibility of *fiqh* lies in its adaptability to local realities, guided by the objectives of Sharia (*maqasid al-shariah*). Similarly, Kamali (2008) contends that custom functions as a moral lens through which Islamic law remains relevant to society's changing circumstances. These perspectives have inspired modern approaches to Islamic legal studies that emphasize social ethics, cultural integration, and community-based morality (Rahim, 2018; Taufik, 2019).

Despite the growing body of literature on Islamic law and cultural adaptation, there remains a notable research gap regarding the systematic integration of *fiqh* norms within the *adat* practices of Malay Riau marriage ceremonies. Most existing works discuss either the theoretical foundation of *adat* and Sharia or general sociological observations of Malay Islamization (Yusof, 2016). Few studies have mapped the detailed intersections between specific *fiqh* principles—such as *niyyah*, *ijab qabul*, and *maslahah*—and the symbolic rituals in Riau's traditional marriage customs. Therefore, this study aims to fill that gap by providing a comprehensive analysis of how Islamic jurisprudence and local customs converge to form a coherent framework of Islamic social ethics in the context of Riau Malay marriage traditions.

### **Research Objectives**

The primary objective of this study is to analyze the conceptual integration between *fiqh* principles and customary values (*adat*) as manifested in the marriage practices of the Malay Riau community. Previous scholars have emphasized that the essence of Islamic law lies in its capacity to harmonize universal religious norms with local socio-cultural realities (Al-Qaradawi, 1998; Kamali, 2008). In the Riau Malay context, this integration is reflected through the embodiment of ethical and moral dimensions of Islamic jurisprudence within the framework of traditional rituals, sustaining both religious authenticity and cultural identity (Azra, 2017; Rahim, 2018). Therefore, this research seeks to construct a theoretical understanding of how *fiqh* interacts dynamically with *adat* in forming a coherent system of Islamic social ethics.

A second objective is to identify and describe the concrete expressions of *fiqh*-based values within the various stages of Malay Riau wedding ceremonies. Rituals such as *merisik*, *meminang*, *berinai*, and *akad nikah* embody fundamental Islamic legal elements, including *niyyah* (intention), *ijab qabul* (contractual consent), and *maslahah* (social benefit), while

maintaining local cultural symbolism (Yusof, 2016; Hooker, 2008). By examining these stages, this study aims to reveal how Islamic law is not merely superimposed upon custom but internalized through indigenous traditions, resulting in a living and practical interpretation of *fiqh* within the community (Effendy, 2015; Taufik, 2019).

The third objective is to explain the social and ethical implications arising from the integration of *fiqh* and *adat* in Riau Malay marriage practices. The synthesis of religious and cultural systems contributes to strengthening communal harmony, moral discipline, and collective responsibility—key features of Islamic social ethics (*akhlaq ijtimai'iyah*) (Hallaq, 2009; Kamali, 2008). Moreover, understanding this integration provides valuable insights into the adaptability of Islamic jurisprudence in plural societies, offering a model for contextual Islamic legal thought that upholds both *maqasid al-shariah* (the higher objectives of Sharia) and local wisdom (*kearifan lokal*) (Rahim, 2018; Azra, 2017). Thus, this research not only seeks to document cultural continuity but also to articulate the ethical relevance of Islamic law within the dynamic socio-cultural setting of the Malay world.

### **Hypothesis / Research Proposition**

This study is founded on the proposition that the marriage practices of the Riau Malay community represent a living manifestation of Islamic social ethics internalized within the framework of local customary values. In the Malay worldview, cultural practices (*adat istiadat*) are not separate from religious obligations but serve as vehicles for expressing Islamic virtues such as sincerity (*ikhlas*), modesty (*iffah*), and communal harmony (*ukhuwah*) (Azra, 2017; Rahim, 2018). The coexistence of Islamic legal norms (*fiqh*) and traditional customs in Malay society demonstrates an ongoing ethical synthesis that preserves both doctrinal integrity and cultural identity (Hooker, 2008; Kamali, 2008).

According to Al-Qaradawi (1998), the essence of *fiqh* lies in its adaptability to different cultural contexts, provided that the fundamental objectives of the Sharia (*maqasid al-shariah*) are maintained. In Riau, the maxim “*adat bersendi syarak, syarak bersendi Kitabullah*” symbolizes this adaptive process, reflecting how divine law is lived through community-based customs that embody moral and social responsibility (Taufik, 2019; Effendy, 2015). Thus, marriage rituals such as *merisik*, *meminang*, and *akad nikah* are not mere cultural performances but expressions of ethical and theological values embedded in daily life.

Building upon this understanding, the hypothesis of this study asserts that:

**The integration of Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*) and Malay Riau customary practices produces a distinct model of Islamic social ethics in which religious principles are internalized through indigenous cultural norms.**

This hypothesis aligns with the broader framework of *'urf* (customary practice) in Islamic legal theory, which recognizes social convention as a legitimate source of law when it supports moral objectives and communal welfare (Hallaq, 2009). Consequently, the Riau Malay marriage tradition provides a case study for understanding how Islam sustains its ethical vitality through cultural embodiment, rather than through rigid formalism.

## Methods

### Research Design

This study employs a **qualitative descriptive design** aimed at exploring the integration between Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*) and local customary values (*adat*) within the context of Riau Malay marriage practices. The qualitative approach is particularly suitable for examining cultural and religious phenomena that involve symbolic meanings, social interactions, and moral values embedded in tradition (Creswell & Poth, 2018). It allows the researcher to interpret the lived experiences and social expressions of the community through naturalistic inquiry rather than numerical generalization (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018).

A descriptive qualitative design is used to capture the authentic relationship between *fiqh* and *adat* as it is practiced, perceived, and narrated by members of the Riau Malay society. This design enables the study to present a comprehensive account of cultural events—specifically, the sequence and meaning of marriage rituals such as *merisik*, *meminang*, *berinai*, and *akad nikah*—and to analyze how these reflect Islamic ethical principles (Taufik, 2019). The approach is also grounded in interpretivist epistemology, which posits that social reality is constructed through shared meanings and cultural practices (Schwandt, 2015). Therefore, the researcher acts as an interpretive instrument, engaging with local actors and textual sources to uncover how Islamic law is contextualized in everyday life (Neuman, 2014).

This research integrates **textual and observational analysis** as complementary strategies. Textual analysis involves examining traditional manuscripts, *tambo*, *petatah-petitih*, and local legal documents to identify expressions of *fiqh* concepts in customary discourse (Rahim, 2018). Observational analysis, on the other hand, entails direct engagement with marriage ceremonies and interviews with cultural and religious figures to document living traditions and interpret their meanings (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2019). Through this dual approach, the study seeks to provide a holistic understanding of how Islamic legal and ethical systems are internalized within Malay customary practices, thereby contributing to the broader discourse on contextual Islamic law and cultural sustainability (Azra, 2017; Kamali, 2008).

### Participants / Sources

The participants and data sources in this research are drawn from both human informants and textual materials, ensuring a balanced representation of lived experiences and

normative discourses. The human participants consist of **traditional leaders (*tokoh adat*)**, **marriage officials (*penghulu nikah*)**, and **religious scholars (*pemuka agama*)** in several districts of Riau Province, including Pekanbaru, Siak, and Indragiri Hilir. These individuals serve as cultural custodians who preserve, interpret, and transmit the integration of *fiqh* and *adat* in everyday social practices (Rahim, 2018). As key social actors, they possess deep knowledge of ritual sequences, symbolic meanings, and the ethical foundations underlying Malay marriage traditions (Taufik, 2019).

The inclusion of *penghulu nikah* and *pemuka agama* is crucial because they operate at the intersection of Islamic law and customary authority, guiding the community in matters of marital legitimacy and moral conduct (Effendy, 2015). Their insights provide firsthand understanding of how *fiqh* principles—such as *niyyah* (intention), *ijab qabul* (contract), and *maslahah* (social benefit)—are contextualized within the local marriage system (Kamali, 2008). Meanwhile, traditional elders (*ninik mamak*) contribute a cultural perspective that reveals how *adat* structures reinforce Islamic social ethics through kinship and ceremonial norms (Hooker, 2008).

In addition to human informants, this study relies on **primary textual sources** that document the codified wisdom and normative foundations of Riau Malay culture. These include **tambo** (historical chronicles), **petatah-petitih** (proverbial sayings), and **adat charters** that express the moral-philosophical linkage between *adat* and *syarak* (Azra, 2017). Such texts not only serve as ethnographic evidence of cultural values but also as interpretive records of Islamic ethical thought as localized in Riau. Complementing these are **classical Islamic legal texts**—including works of Shafi'i jurisprudence and *fiqh al-'urf*—which provide the theoretical framework for understanding how Islamic law accommodates customary practice within its legal reasoning (Hallaq, 2009; Al-Qaradawi, 1998).

Together, these diverse sources enable a holistic exploration of the interrelationship between religion, culture, and ethics in Riau Malay marriage practices. The triangulation of oral testimony, lived observation, and textual interpretation ensures the validity and depth of the qualitative analysis (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2019).

### **Data Collection Techniques**

This study employed **three primary data collection techniques**—literature review, semi-structured interviews, and field observation—to obtain both textual and empirical data that reflect the integration of *fiqh* and *adat* in Riau Malay marriage practices. These methods were selected to ensure methodological triangulation, thereby strengthening the validity and depth of qualitative interpretation (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018).

**First, a comprehensive literature review** (*studi pustaka*) was conducted to examine classical and contemporary Islamic legal sources, as well as anthropological works on Malay customary law and social practices. This stage included analyzing relevant *fiqh* texts—particularly within the Shafi‘i tradition—and previous studies discussing the role of *‘urf* (custom) in Islamic jurisprudence (Hallaq, 2009; Al-Qaradawi, 1998). In addition, ethnographic and sociological literature on Riau Malay culture was reviewed to identify prevailing moral concepts, ritual structures, and value systems that inform marriage traditions (Azra, 2017; Hooker, 2008; Rahim, 2018). The purpose of this literature review was to establish a theoretical foundation that contextualizes how Islamic law operates within local cultural frameworks.

**Second, semi-structured interviews** were carried out with selected informants representing key social and religious roles, including *tokoh adat* (traditional leaders), *penghulu nikah* (marriage officiants), and *pemuka agama* (religious scholars). Semi-structured interviews allow flexibility in questioning while maintaining a clear thematic focus, enabling the researcher to elicit rich, narrative data about community interpretations of Islamic values in marriage customs (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015). Each interview explored participants’ understanding of ritual meaning, ethical intentions, and legal considerations that bridge *adat* and *fiqh*. The use of open-ended questioning also facilitated dialogical engagement and cultural sensitivity, consistent with the interpretive paradigm of qualitative inquiry (Schwandt, 2015).

**Third, field observation** was conducted during selected Riau Malay marriage ceremonies to capture real-time cultural expressions and symbolic enactments of Islamic ethics. Observation focused on ritual stages such as *merisik*, *meminang*, *berinai*, *akad nikah*, and *beradat*, documenting interactions, recitations, and gestures that illustrate the coexistence of religious and cultural values. Observational data were recorded through detailed field notes and, where appropriate, photographic documentation to ensure contextual accuracy (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2019). This technique enabled the researcher to understand *fiqh* not only as a legal system but as a lived ethical practice manifested in local custom (Taufik, 2019).

By combining these three techniques—textual, narrative, and observational—the study obtained multidimensional insights into how Islamic law and *adat* converge in practice, reinforcing the methodological rigor and interpretive depth expected in qualitative Islamic studies (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018).

### **Data Analysis Techniques**

The data in this study were analyzed using a **thematic analysis approach**, which is widely recognized in qualitative research for identifying, organizing, and interpreting patterns of meaning within data (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2019). This analytical framework was employed to categorize the manifestations of *fiqh* values and cultural

symbols (*simbol adat*) within Malay Riau marriage practices. Thematic analysis allows the researcher to derive both explicit and latent meanings from interview transcripts, field notes, and textual documents such as *tambo* and *petatah-petitih* (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The process involved multiple coding stages—open coding, axial coding, and selective coding—to identify recurring themes related to religious ethics, cultural harmony, and social functions of marriage rituals.

Each theme was then interpreted through the lens of **Islamic social ethics**, drawing on theoretical concepts of *'urf* (customary practice) and *maslahah* (public benefit) within Islamic jurisprudence. The concept of *'urf* recognizes the legitimacy of custom as a secondary source of law when it aligns with Sharia objectives (*maqasid al-shariah*) (Hallaq, 2009). This principle is particularly relevant in understanding how Malay Riau customs internalize Islamic values without compromising theological foundations (Al-Qaradawi, 1998; Kamali, 2008). Meanwhile, *maslahah* provides an evaluative criterion for determining the moral and communal benefits of customary practices, emphasizing social harmony, justice, and moral propriety (Chapra, 2000; Effendy, 2015).

Through this interpretive framework, the analysis sought to reveal how specific ritual stages—such as *merisik* (pre-marital inquiry), *meminang* (formal proposal), *akad nikah* (marital contract), and *beradat* (post-wedding customs)—embody *fiqh*-based moral reasoning while reinforcing local social ethics. The integration of thematic analysis with *fiqh*-based interpretation allowed for a deeper understanding of how Islamic law operates as both a normative and cultural system within Riau Malay society (Azra, 2017; Rahim, 2018). To ensure analytical rigor, data triangulation was employed by cross-referencing findings from interviews, observations, and textual materials, thereby maintaining both interpretive depth and contextual accuracy (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018; Miles et al., 2019).

## Results

### Conceptual Integration of Fiqh and Adat

The conceptual integration between *fiqh* and *adat* in Riau Malay society represents a historically rooted process of religious and cultural synthesis. Islam entered the Malay Archipelago through a pattern of gradual assimilation rather than abrupt legal enforcement, allowing local customs to evolve within the ethical framework of Sharia (Azra, 2017; Hooker, 2008). Over time, these interactions formed a distinct socio-religious identity in which Islamic norms were internalized into indigenous cultural practices, producing what many scholars describe as an “Islamic-Malay moral order” (Rahim, 2018; Taufik, 2019).

In this context, *adat* is not viewed as a secular or pre-Islamic relic but as a dynamic cultural mechanism through which Islamic values are expressed in daily social life. The Malay

worldview positions religion (*agama*) and custom (*adat*) as interdependent domains, each reinforcing the other: *fiqh* offers the normative foundation of behavior, while *adat* provides the contextual expression of these norms within communal life (Kamali, 2008; Effendy, 2015). This harmonious relationship illustrates what Hallaq (2009) calls the “adaptive elasticity” of Islamic law—its ability to embody divine principles within diverse cultural frameworks without losing theological coherence.

The normative basis for this synthesis is enshrined in the well-known philosophical maxim “*adat bersendi syarak, syarak bersendi Kitabullah.*” This saying, deeply embedded in Riau Malay identity, asserts that custom is based on Sharia, and Sharia itself is grounded in the Qur’an as divine revelation (Rahim, 2018; Azra, 2017). Thus, *adat* gains moral legitimacy when aligned with Islamic law, while *fiqh* gains sociocultural relevance through its embodiment in local traditions. This principle not only bridges divine command and social practice but also functions as an ethical constitution regulating moral conduct, family relations, and community harmony (Hooker, 2008; Kamali, 2008).

The integration of *fiqh* and *adat* in this conceptual framework reflects a reciprocal relationship between revelation and culture—one that transforms Islamic jurisprudence from a mere legal doctrine into a lived moral system. Consequently, the Riau Malay model demonstrates that Islamic law can function as both a normative and cultural institution, fostering social ethics, communal solidarity, and moral order in everyday life (Effendy, 2015; Taufik, 2019).

### **Stages of Marriage and Fiqh Alignment**

The stages of the Riau Malay marriage ceremony reflect a sequential integration between *adat* (custom) and *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence), each stage representing not only a cultural ritual but also a manifestation of Islamic ethical and legal principles. The process demonstrates how *adat* functions as a living interpretation of *fiqh*, contextualizing religious norms within the moral and social realities of Malay society (Azra, 2017; Hooker, 2008). Through this harmonization, marriage becomes a comprehensive institution embodying religious legality, social order, and spiritual ethics (Kamali, 2008).

The **first stage**, *merisik* (pre-marital inquiry), corresponds to the *fiqh* principle of **niyyah** (intention) and **taharri** (cautious investigation). In Islamic ethics, intention determines the moral quality of an action, and prudence in choosing a spouse is a reflection of *taqwa* (piety) and responsibility (Al-Qaradawi, 1998; Kamali, 2008). This stage emphasizes the ethical obligation to ensure compatibility in faith, character, and family background, aligning with the Prophet’s guidance that marriage should be based on religiosity and moral integrity (Hallaq, 2009). Within the Riau Malay context, *merisik* expresses communal prudence, where family

representatives discreetly inquire about the prospective bride, embodying social ethics and respect for privacy (Rahim, 2018).

The **second stage, *meminang*** (formal proposal), carries the symbolic essence of **ijab** and **qabul**—the contractual spirit of *fiqh al-nikah*—that defines mutual consent and social responsibility in marriage (Effendy, 2015). This act formalizes the ethical commitment between families, expressing transparency, accountability, and honor (*maruah*) in accordance with Islamic moral standards (Taufik, 2019). The Malay *adat meminang* reinforces the communal nature of marriage, transforming a personal union into a social covenant grounded in faith and collective approval (Azra, 2017).

The **third stage, *berinai*** (henna ritual), signifies **purification** and **spiritual preparation** before the sacred contract. In Islamic tradition, purification (*taharah*) and supplication (*du'ā*) are acts of spiritual readiness that precede major life transitions (Kamali, 2008; Al-Qaradawi, 1998). The symbolic application of henna in the Riau Malay wedding functions as a cultural form of *tazkiyah al-nafs* (self-purification), embodying beauty, modesty, and prayerful anticipation. Thus, *berinai* integrates cultural aesthetics with spiritual mindfulness, revealing how *adat* internalizes Islamic spirituality in communal celebrations (Rahim, 2018; Taufik, 2019).

The **fourth stage, *akad nikah*** (marriage contract), represents the culmination of Islamic legal and moral obligations. It constitutes the formal enactment of the *fiqh al-nikah* framework, involving the *wali*, witnesses, and verbal exchange of *ijab* and *qabul*, which validate the contract under Islamic law (Hallaq, 2009; Kamali, 2008). In Riau, this stage retains strict adherence to the *fiqh* requirements while integrating ceremonial customs, such as the recitation of blessings and *doa selamat*, symbolizing both the legality and sanctity (*sakralitas*) of marriage (Effendy, 2015; Rahim, 2018).

The **final stage, *beradat*** (post-wedding communal ritual), signifies the social dimension of Islamic ethics—**silaturrahim** and **ukhuwah** (brotherhood). This stage reaffirms marriage as a means of strengthening kinship ties and community solidarity, which are central principles in Islamic social ethics (Al-Qaradawi, 1998; Azra, 2017). The *adat beradat* ritual, characterized by communal feasting and gift exchanges, embodies gratitude (*syukur*), generosity (*karam*), and social harmony (*muafakat*), transforming individual joy into collective virtue (Taufik, 2019).

Overall, the alignment between *fiqh* and *adat* across these five stages illustrates the dynamic integration of Islamic law with local cultural wisdom. The process of marriage in Riau thus exemplifies a living ethical system where Islamic norms are not merely imposed but

**embodied** within the symbolic, moral, and social fabric of Malay tradition (Rahim, 2018; Kamali, 2008).

### **Findings Summary**

The findings of this study reveal that **Riau Malay customary law (*adat Melayu Riau*) does not contradict the principles of Islamic law (*syariat*)**, but rather enriches and contextualizes them within the framework of Islamic social ethics. This integration demonstrates that local culture can function as an effective medium for sustaining Islamic values through lived traditions, moral codes, and collective rituals (Azra, 2017; Hooker, 2008). Far from being an obstacle to orthodoxy, *adat* serves as a cultural embodiment of Sharia that translates legal and theological principles into socially meaningful practices (Rahim, 2018; Kamali, 2008).

The principle of “*adat bersendi syarak, syarak bersendi Kitabullah*” continues to serve as the normative axis of this integration, reinforcing the idea that Malay cultural identity is inseparable from Islamic faith. In practice, Riau Malay communities interpret Islamic legal concepts—such as *niyyah* (intention), *maslahah* (social benefit), and *‘urf* (custom)—not as abstract doctrines but as moral guidelines for achieving social harmony and spiritual fulfillment (Hallaq, 2009; Al-Qaradawi, 1998). Each marriage ritual stage—from *merisik* to *beradat*—reflects this synergy, where ethical conduct, communal solidarity, and spirituality coexist under the moral canopy of Islam (Taufik, 2019).

The study further indicates that this integration fosters a living model of **Islamic social ethics (*akhlak ijtima’i*)**, characterized by collective responsibility, mutual respect, and moral discipline within family and community life (Effendy, 2015; Kamali, 2008). Through *adat*, abstract legal norms are transformed into everyday moral actions—such as the emphasis on respect for elders, social cooperation, and gratitude—which align with the ethical objectives of Sharia (*maqasid al-shariah*) (Chapra, 2000; Rahim, 2018). In this sense, *adat Melayu Riau* operates not as a parallel system to Islamic law but as a **cultural extension of *fiqh*** that preserves the universality of Islam while reflecting local wisdom.

Therefore, the integration of *fiqh* and *adat* in Riau Malay marriage practices can be viewed as a **model of ethical continuity**—a social mechanism through which Islam remains relevant, functional, and deeply rooted in cultural identity. It demonstrates that Islamic law, when harmonized with indigenous traditions, is capable of generating an inclusive moral order that sustains both religious authenticity and cultural resilience (Azra, 2017; Rahim, 2018).

## Discussion

### Theoretical Interpretation

The integration between *fiqh* and *adat* in Riau Malay marriage practices can be theoretically understood through the Islamic legal concepts of *'urf* (custom) and *maqasid al-shariah* (the higher objectives of Sharia). Within the framework of *'urf*, local customs are recognized as a legitimate source of legal consideration as long as they do not contradict the fundamental principles of Islamic law (Hallaq, 2009). This principle reflects the dynamic adaptability of Islamic jurisprudence, which allows cultural norms to be harmonized with religious obligations to maintain justice, morality, and communal welfare (Kamali, 2008). In this sense, *adat Melayu Riau* functions as a contextual expression of *fiqh*—a living tradition that embodies divine guidance within the moral and social realities of the Malay community (Rahim, 2018; Azra, 2017).

The concept of *'urf* thus provides the theoretical bridge that connects *fiqh* and *adat*. It enables Islamic law to operate not as a rigid legal code but as a flexible ethical system that internalizes local values consistent with the objectives of the Sharia (Al-Qaradawi, 1998). The Malay principle “*adat bersendi syarak, syarak bersendi Kitabullah*” demonstrates the application of *'urf* in its purest form—where custom derives its legitimacy from divine revelation and functions as an instrument for realizing *maslahah* (social benefit) and moral order (Hooker, 2008; Effendy, 2015). Hence, Riau Malay customs are not seen as deviations from Sharia, but as culturally embedded mechanisms for achieving the higher goals of Islamic law.

Furthermore, the *maqasid al-shariah* framework, which prioritizes the protection of religion (*din*), life (*nafs*), intellect (*'aql*), lineage (*nasl*), and property (*mal*), provides the moral foundation for understanding the ethical dimension of *adat* (Chapra, 2000; Kamali, 2008). In the context of Malay marriage traditions, these objectives are reflected in rituals that promote family harmony, mutual responsibility, and social stability. For instance, *merisik* and *meminang* safeguard lineage and honor (*nasab* and *maruah*), while *akad nikah* upholds legal clarity (*hifz al-nasl*) and spiritual sanctity (*hifz al-din*). These practices embody what Kamali (2008) terms as “ethical *fiqh*,” where Islamic law transcends legal formalism to cultivate moral consciousness and social virtue.

Thus, the theoretical relationship between *fiqh* and *adat* in Riau can be conceptualized as an **ethical symbiosis**—a reciprocal interaction where law sustains moral order and culture provides a lived context for law’s ethical application. This theoretical interpretation aligns with the view that Islamic jurisprudence is both a legal and moral science (*'ilm al-akhlaq*), designed to guide humanity toward justice (*'adl*) and welfare (*maslahah*) (Hallaq, 2009; Al-Qaradawi,

1998). Consequently, the Riau Malay experience exemplifies a model of *Islamic legal pluralism*, where divine principles and local customs coexist to sustain an integrated moral community.

### Comparative Analysis

The integration between *fiqh* and *adat* in the Riau Malay community demonstrates striking similarities with other Malay societies in Sumatra and the Malay Peninsula, particularly in the way Islamic legal norms are internalized within customary practices. In both regions, Islam has not displaced indigenous traditions but has reinterpreted them in accordance with Sharia principles—a process often described as *Islamic indigenization* (Azra, 2017; Hooker, 2008). For instance, in **Minangkabau, West Sumatra**, the well-known maxim “*adat basandi syarak, syarak basandi Kitabullah*” mirrors the Riau Malay principle “*adat bersendi syarak, syarak bersendi Kitabullah*.” Both expressions affirm that custom derives its moral and legal validity from Islam, symbolizing a shared epistemological foundation of the Malay-Islamic worldview (Rahim, 2018; Abdullah, 2012).

However, the Riau model differs in its **social and ritual emphasis**. While Minangkabau society integrates *fiqh* primarily through matrilineal structures and inheritance laws (Hadler, 2008), Riau Malay customs focus on marriage, kinship, and community rituals as central arenas for ethical integration (Taufik, 2019). This distinction highlights how local socio-political structures influence the modes through which *fiqh* and *adat* coexist. Similarly, in **Malaysia**, Malay marriage traditions such as *merisik*, *bertunang*, and *akad nikah* also reflect the incorporation of Sharia into local *adat*, yet the process has become more institutionalized under state-administered Islamic family law (Yusof, 2016). In contrast, the Riau context retains a more organic, community-based model of integration, where religious authority and customary leadership collaborate informally to preserve moral order (Effendy, 2015).

From a theoretical standpoint, these comparative observations align with **contemporary Islamic social ethics**, which emphasize the contextual adaptability (*murunah*) of Islamic law to promote moral and social balance (Al-Qaradawi, 1998; Kamali, 2008). Scholars such as Chapra (2000) and Soroush (2002) argue that the ethical vitality of Islam lies in its capacity to integrate divine law with the lived realities of human societies, achieving *maslahah* (social benefit) through cultural expression. The Riau Malay experience exemplifies this theoretical principle: by embedding *fiqh* within *adat*, the community realizes the *maqasid al-shariah*—protection of faith, family, and social harmony—while preserving indigenous identity (Hallaq, 2009; Rahim, 2018).

In summary, the comparison across Malay societies reveals that the **integration of *fiqh* and *adat*** is not uniform but context-dependent, shaped by historical experience, governance

structures, and local moral systems. Nevertheless, all cases confirm the compatibility of Islamic jurisprudence with local customs when guided by the objectives of Sharia. The Riau Malay model contributes to the discourse on contemporary Islamic ethics by demonstrating that *fiqh* can function as both a legal and cultural institution that sustains social justice, communal solidarity, and moral virtue in a plural and evolving society (Azra, 2017; Kamali, 2008).

## Implications

The integration of *fiqh* and *adat* in the Riau Malay context provides an important **contribution to the development of contextual Islamic law** (*fiqh al-waqi'*), demonstrating how Sharia principles can be harmonized with local socio-cultural realities without compromising theological authenticity. This model reaffirms the dynamic and adaptive nature of Islamic jurisprudence, which, according to Kamali (2008), is designed not merely as a set of rigid rules but as a moral-legal system responsive to time, place, and circumstance. The Riau experience exemplifies what Hallaq (2009) describes as “*legal contextualization*”—the process by which Islamic law acquires local character through engagement with indigenous values, language, and social ethics. By integrating *fiqh* with *adat*, the community preserves the universality of Sharia while expressing it through culturally meaningful practices (Rahim, 2018; Azra, 2017).

This integration also serves as a **model of religion–culture harmonization** in the modern era, particularly relevant in multicultural Muslim societies where globalization often creates tension between religious norms and cultural identity. The Riau Malay synthesis illustrates that religion and culture need not be in opposition but can coexist as complementary domains, each enriching the other (Effendy, 2015). In contemporary Islamic thought, this aligns with the *maqasid al-shariah* framework, which promotes values such as justice (*'adl*), balance (*wasatiyyah*), and communal welfare (*maslahah 'ammah*) as guiding principles for modern legal reform (Al-Qaradawi, 1998; Chapra, 2000). Thus, integrating *fiqh* with *adat* provides a living example of *Islam rahmatan lil 'alamin*—Islam as a source of mercy and moral balance within cultural diversity (Taufik, 2019).

Practically, the Riau model contributes to **the renewal of contextual Islamic jurisprudence** by demonstrating that *fiqh* can be reconstructed not only through textual interpretation (*ijtihad*) but also through the recognition of cultural wisdom (*hikmah 'urfiyyah*). This approach could inform the formulation of family law, social ethics, and cultural policies across the Muslim world, particularly in Southeast Asia, where local traditions remain strong (Hooker, 2008; Yusof, 2016). It suggests that the sustainability of Islamic law in modern contexts depends on its ability to accommodate local expressions of faith while maintaining universal principles of morality and justice.

In sum, the integration of *fiqh* and *adat* in Riau Malay society offers a viable **paradigm of Islamic legal pluralism**—a framework where divine revelation and human culture operate symbiotically to construct an ethical civilization. This model underscores that contextualization does not dilute Islam but strengthens its relevance by rooting legal and moral values in the lived realities of Muslim communities (Kamali, 2008; Azra, 2017).

### **Limitations and Future Research**

Like many qualitative studies rooted in ethnographic observation, this research faces several **limitations** related to the scope, representativeness, and depth of field data. First, the study primarily focuses on selected districts in Riau Province—particularly Pekanbaru, Siak, and Indragiri Hilir—thus limiting the **geographical representativeness** of findings (Creswell & Poth, 2018). While these areas provide rich insight into the integration of *fiqh* and *adat*, they may not fully capture the diversity of Malay communities across the broader archipelago, where linguistic, historical, and social variations significantly influence customary expression (Hooker, 2008; Azra, 2017). Second, the **availability and accessibility of informants**—such as traditional leaders (*ninik mamak*), *penghulu nikah*, and local scholars—posed challenges due to time constraints and differing interpretations of customary practices (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2019). Consequently, the findings emphasize cultural synthesis within specific contexts rather than providing a statistically generalizable model.

Another limitation lies in the **lack of longitudinal data** to trace the evolution of *adat* practices over time, especially in response to modernization, urbanization, and the growing formalization of Islamic family law in Indonesia and Malaysia (Effendy, 2015; Yusof, 2016). The influence of state religious institutions and global Islamic reform movements may gradually reshape how *fiqh* interacts with local traditions, calling for continuous monitoring and documentation. Future research could adopt a **comparative and interdisciplinary approach**, examining how similar integrative patterns unfold across different Malay cultural zones, such as Minangkabau, Jambi, and Southern Thailand (Hadler, 2008; Abdullah, 2012).

For **future research directions**, scholars are encouraged to employ **comparative cross-regional and diachronic analyses**, combining ethnography, historical study, and socio-legal perspectives. This would help identify how Islamic legal principles evolve within various sociocultural ecosystems while maintaining alignment with the *maqasid al-shariah* (Kamali, 2008; Hallaq, 2009). Integrating digital humanities methods—such as textual corpus analysis of *tambo*, *hikayat*, and *fatwa*—could also enrich understanding of how Islamic and cultural narratives interact dynamically (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). Ultimately, such approaches would deepen the theoretical framework of *Islamic legal pluralism* and contribute to the ongoing discourse on contextual jurisprudence in Southeast Asia (Azra, 2017; Rahim, 2018).

## Conclusion

The study concludes that the **integration of *fiqh* and *adat* within Riau Malay marriage practices represents a living expression of Islamic social ethics (*akhlaq ijtimai'i*)**—a praxis where legal norms and cultural values coexist harmoniously to sustain moral order, family stability, and communal solidarity. Rather than positioning *adat* as a challenge to Islamic orthodoxy, Riau Malay society has transformed it into a moral instrument that operationalizes the ethical objectives of Sharia (*maqasid al-shariah*) in daily life (Kamali, 2008; Hallaq, 2009). Through rituals such as *merisik*, *meminang*, and *akad nikah*, the community expresses *fiqh* principles in symbolic and ethical forms that embody the unity of law, faith, and culture (Rahim, 2018; Taufik, 2019).

This integration reflects the **success of the Malay community in preserving Islamic values within their local cultural framework**, demonstrating that contextualization does not dilute Islam but rather enhances its moral vitality and social relevance. By embedding divine principles in local customs, the Riau Malays exemplify what Azra (2017) terms the “indigenization of Islam”—a process through which universal religious ethics are adapted to regional traditions while maintaining their theological integrity. The synergy of *fiqh* and *adat* thus functions as a model of *Islamic humanism*, where religion and culture interact to nurture justice, compassion, and collective well-being (Effendy, 2015; Chapra, 2000).

The findings further underscore the need to **strengthen the study of ‘*urf* (custom) in contemporary Islamic jurisprudence**, especially within the framework of legal contextualization (*fiqh al-waqi'*). Modern Islamic scholarship should revisit the epistemological role of ‘*urf* not merely as a secondary source of law but as a dynamic interpretive tool for bridging Sharia and social change (Al-Qaradawi, 1998; Kamali, 2008). Future research and policy development in Islamic law should integrate cultural hermeneutics to ensure that legal interpretation remains responsive to diverse sociocultural realities. By doing so, the spirit of Islam—as a universal yet contextually adaptive moral system—can continue to guide Muslim societies toward ethical progress, cultural resilience, and sustainable coexistence (Azra, 2017; Rahim, 2018).

## Conflict of Interests

The author hereby declares that there is **no conflict of interest** related to the research, authorship, or publication of this article. This declaration aligns with the ethical standards established by international academic organizations, which emphasize transparency and accountability in scholarly communication (Committee on Publication Ethics [COPE], 2019). Maintaining a clear separation between academic integrity and external influence ensures that

the findings and interpretations presented in this study are based solely on empirical evidence and scholarly reasoning (Resnik, 2020).

Furthermore, the author confirms that **no financial, institutional, or personal relationships** have inappropriately influenced the research design, data interpretation, or conclusions of this work. The study was conducted in accordance with the *ICIS Ethical Guidelines for Academic Publication* and the general principles of responsible research, which require full disclosure of potential conflicts to maintain public trust in academic scholarship (World Conference on Research Integrity [WCRI], 2018). Such transparency is fundamental to upholding ethical rigor, particularly in the field of Islamic studies, where objectivity and moral responsibility are central to scholarly inquiry (Iqbal, 2017).

In summary, the research was carried out **independently and objectively**, guided solely by academic interests and ethical commitment to the advancement of knowledge in Islamic jurisprudence and cultural studies. The absence of conflict of interest strengthens the credibility and neutrality of the findings, contributing to the broader integrity of interdisciplinary research in religion and society (COPE, 2019; Resnik, 2020).

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