



Sacrificing Catfish as Marriage Tradition in Indonesia in 'Urf Perspective

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengkaji tradisi perkawinan masyarakat Indonesia di Yogyakarta yang disebut *Mbeleh Lele* (kurban lele) yang sudah berlangsung beberapa generasi. Tradisi perkawinan ini mengharuskan pasangan yang akan menikah untuk menyembelih sepasang ikan lele sebelum akad nikah. Penelitian hukum empiris ini menggunakan pendekatan sosio-hukum dengan wawancara sebagai data primer dan literature-literatur terkait sebagai data sekunder. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode analisis deskriptif dengan 'urf (teori tradisi Islam) sebagai alat analisisnya. Terakhir, hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pandangan masyarakat Yogyakarta terhadap Tradisi *Mbeleh Lele* terbagi menjadi dua jenis: pemimpin terkemuka dan masyarakat umum. Para pemimpin adat sangat yakin bahwa akan ada efek negatif jika tradisi tidak dilaksanakan. Sementara itu, masyarakat umum mengatakan bahwa mereka menuruti budaya ketika mengalami dampak buruk. Dalam perspektif 'urf, tradisi *Mbeleh Lele* dapat dikategorikan sebagai 'urf *sahih* (tradisi yang benar) karena memenuhi syarat yang dipersyaratkan.

Kata kunci: *Perkawinan; Tradisi Mbeleh Lele; 'Urf*

Abstract

The paper examines the Indonesian community's marriage tradition in Yogyakarta, the so-called *Mbeleh Lele* (sacrificing catfish), which has been implemented for several generations. This marriage tradition requires a couple who will marry to slaughter a pair of catfish before the ceremony of a marriage contract. This empirical legal research uses the socio-legal approach with the interview as primary data and related books as secondary data. This study applies a descriptive analysis method with the 'urf (Islamic theory of tradition) as the tool of analysis. Finally, the research shows that the Yogyakarta community's views towards *Mbeleh Lele* Tradition are divided into two types: prominent leader and general people. The prominent leaders firmly believe that there will be a negative effect if the tradition is not implemented. Meanwhile, the general people say that they obey the culture when they experience the adverse effect. In the 'urf perspective, the *Mbeleh Lele* tradition can be categorized as the 'urf *sahih* (correct tradition) because it meets the required condition.

Keywords: *Marriage; Mbeleh Lele Tradition; 'Urf*

Introduction

Indonesia has a lot of tradition types as rituality, including marriage tradition (Geertz, 1992; Wirawana and Widanab, 2020). *Mbeleh Lele* is a marriage tradition of the Yogyakarta Regency, which has been a custom for generations. This tradition is an obligation before the marriage contract (*akad*) takes place. This wedding tradition requires the couple who will marry to slaughter a pair of catfish before the wedding day. This tradition is carried out at night before the process of *akad*. For instance, if the *akad* is planned tomorrow, the slaughter preparation will be implemented today in the evening. The catfish that have been slaughtered are cleaned to get rid of its mucus and cooked with several special spices as the offering, which is called by *Ingkung Sewu* (a thousand cooked chicken). Inside that offering, there is a pair of catfish, a pair of scaly fish, and black soybeans: all these foods are cooked. The offerings are then processed into four pieces of *ambeng* (special dish), which are prayed for by the elderly villager (Aziz, 2017).

Mbeleh Lele tradition comes from the ancestors who went to a particular place to learn supernatural powers. To get those supernatural power, the ancestors had to slaughter catfish. After Sunan Kalijaga arrived, people used this tradition as a preaching method to spread the teachings of Islam in the community (Novtasari, 2018). This tradition of *Mbeleh Lele* is still valid to avoid negative impacts and to get blessings from Sunan Kalijaga as he loved to eat catfish. Some research has revealed that various animals have been used to complete the tradition and beliefs, such as buffalo, rooster (Astuti, 2010), black rooster (Ali Firdaus, 2018), cow and buffalo as offering (YE Simanjuntak, 2017), cow of buffalo (Argo, 2020) horse (Taylor et al., 2020), dog, and cat (Scanes and Chengzhong, 2018). What makes this research different is in the object. The holy animal was catfish that is smaller than other sacred animals. The tradition also analyzed with the theory '*urf*' (Sarjana and Suratman, 2017)

Mbeleh Lele tradition has a negative impact if it is not implemented. Based on the interview with BW (the older person), it shows that whoever wants to get married should consider this tradition because it will cause some negative impacts, such as being dazed, being in pain, having difficulties to earn money and even dying.

In analyzing this tradition, specific tools of analysis are required, such as legal reviews in the *Mbeleh Lele* tradition in Yogyakarta. In the Islamic term, the cultural and environmental influences which become a tradition known as '*urf*'. Therefore, the theory of '*urf*' as an analytical tool in this research is needed. '*Urf*' is known by custom. '*Urf*' in Abdul Wahab Khalaf's statement is something already known by humanity through words, behaviors, and actions, at the same time called by customs. In *Syara'* term, there is no difference between '*Urf*' and customs (Khalaf, 2003). Finally, the purposes of this research are describing the views of the community in Yogyakarta towards the *Mbeleh Lele* Tradition in the traditional marriage and analyzing the '*Urf*' review on the *Mbeleh Lele* marriage tradition in Yogyakarta.

Methodology

This research is a kind of empirical legal research. It's research that is related to the opinions and behaviors of community members in the community. In other words, empirical legal research tries to reveal the implementation of the *Mbeleh Lele* tradition in the Yogyakarta (law in action) (Sunggono, 2011; Waluyo, 2002). This research uses a socio-legal approach to examine the condition of scientific objects and the community's norms (Abdullah, 2006; Amiruddin and Asikin, 2010). This approach can provide a more holistic view of legal phenomena in the community (Efendi, 2016). Data collection techniques are carried out by triangulation or combination, inductive data analysis, and the results of research emphasized the meaning of the object under study (Sugiyono, 2008). In qualitative research, utilizing existing theories is explanatory material (Noor, 2011).

The location of the research object was conducted in Bantul Regency, Yogyakarta province. The research was undertaken in this place because the area contained customary law about the tradition of *MbelehLele* in marriage. In the city, there are implementers of the *MbelehLele* tradition. The majority of the local community is Muslim, and the majority of the consumptive animals used in traditional marriage are the bigger animals. It is interesting when this tradition uses catfish.

The data sources consist of primary data and secondary data. Primary data is obtained, observed, and recorded directly from the primary source (Cane and Kritzer, 2010; Marzuki, 2005). The words and actions of observation or interviews are the primary data sources. The secondary data is the data that the collection is not attempted alone. The usefulness of secondary information is to guide research (Merriam, 2009; Creswell, 2009). The data obtained from a library study aims to achieve a theoretical basis from books about the object of research, the internet, and other literature about the Customary Marriage. The data collection techniques are interviews, observation, and documentation (Seidman, 2006). The data analysis method used in this research is a descriptive analysis method with the '*urf*' as the tool of analysis (Harisuddin, 2016; Aripin, 2016).

The Views of Yogyakarta Community towards *Mbeleh Lele* Tradition in Traditional Marriage

Marriage is one of the most prestigious events in ordinary people (Huda, 2018; Kharlie, 2013). This event is not only a matter regarding those concerned (women and men), but also parents, siblings, and families. We often hear that marriage in Indonesian society is a marriage between family and family. It is an indicator of how many rules must be implemented relating to traditions that contain religious-magical properties (Trianto and Tutik, 2008).

What makes this research different from other research is in the final answer at analyzing the tradition and classification of the community views. The other inquiry about the customary marriage is only stagnant in the middle of the short conclusion, especially in the '*urf*' analyzing and don't classify the views. They may organize it without explanation.

This research included all classifying views of the community, dividing the two 'urf conditions, and comparing the two until it finally came with the suggested answer. This research divided the opinions of the society towards *Mbeleh Lele* Tradition in Traditional Marriage into four categories: the meaning of the tradition, the history of the tradition, the procedures of the tradition, and the impacts of the tradition. Based on the result of the interviews, the views of the Triharjo community, Pandak District, Bantul Regency towards the *MbelehLele* Tradition in marriage are as follows.

a. The Meaning of the Tradition

For BY, a village leader, the meaning of *MbelehLele* is a tradition to slaughter a pair of catfish in the night before the marriage contract. It can be inferred that *Mbeleh Lele* is Yogyakarta's community tradition that has been implemented for generations. This marriage tradition obliges the couple who will marry to slaughter a pair of catfish before the wedding day. This tradition is carried out at night before the marriage contract (*akad*) is held. For example, if the marriage contract is planned tomorrow, the slaughter preparation will be carried out today in the evening.

b. The History of the Tradition

Mbeleh Lele tradition has its history. Based on the interview with BW and ES, who is considered the village's leaders, it is clear that *Mbeleh Lele* tradition comes from the ancestors who went to a particular place to learn supernatural power. The ancestors were required to slaughter catfish to get that supernatural power. After the arrival of Sunan Kalijaga, this tradition was used as a preaching medium to spread Islam's teachings in the community (Kasdi, 2017; Mubasyaroh, 2017). This tradition of *Mbeleh Lele* is still valid today to avoid disaster and get blessings from Sunan Kalijaga since catfish was considered his favorite food.

c. The Procedures of the Tradition

Every tradition has its procedures to implement, as well as *Mbeleh Lele* tradition. Based on the interview with BW, it can be inferred that the Catfish that has been slaughtered is cleaned from its mucus and cooked with several special spices as the offering, which is called by *Ingkung Sewu* (a thousand of grilled chicken). Inside that offering, there's a pair of catfish, a pair of scaly fish, and black soybeans, which all those foodstuffs are in cooked condition. Then the offerings are processed into four pieces of *Ambeng*, which are prayed by the leader. That's not all. Based on the data of observation, there's money on the offering.

As one of resident, SB only knows little things about the procedure—the general one—that is a pair of catfish, and grated young coconut then divided into four plates. She argued that the processes of *Mbeleh Lele* are quite simple. The opinion seems to be quite similar to SP's idea about the procedure of *Mbeleh Lele*, even though he is the implementer. He also left everything to his father.

d. The Impact of the Tradition

Mbeleh Lele tradition has a negative impact if it is not implemented. The interview with BW (the elderly) shows that whoever wants to get married, they are required to consider the tradition because it will cause negative if impact,

like being dazed, being in pain, being hard to earn a living, and even dying. Based on the interview, some people who did not implement this tradition became dazed and unable to find the Office of Religious Affairs (KUA), even though KUA was close to their home.

Furthermore, the next informant is WB. This informant is recommended by the elderly because he was affected by tradition before. The result of the interview shows that he didn't believe in *Mbeleh Lele* tradition and decided not to implement the culture. Still, after affected by this tradition, he then believed in this tradition. Based on the interview with WB, he felt like he was followed by something unseen. Sometimes WB felt like something was coming, but he didn't know what it was.

This tradition also causes social sanction. The interview with SP shows that she was indeed the implementer of the culture. It is because SP got orders from her father on the advice of the village elderly. She was one of those who did not believe in the *Mbeleh Lele* tradition, but since SP was a native there who grew up in the village environment, she thought that if she did not implement it, she would invite the negative comments that were not pleasant to hear for her family.

The results of the interview towards the *MbelehLele* Tradition in the marriage are as follows:

The Views of the Informants towards the *MbelehLele* Tradition

No	Informants	Meaning	History	Procedures	Impacts
1.	BW	<i>MbelehLele</i> is a tradition to slaughter a pair of catfish in the night before the marriage contract is held	From the ancestors who went to a particular place to learn magic, Sunan Kalijaga changed this tradition into preaching media to spread the teaching of Islam	The tradition is implemented at the night before the marriage contract is held, The offering consists of a pair of catfish cooked with several special spices, four ambeng (dish), prayed by the religious leader (modin) and the traditional leader.	Believes that if the tradition is not implemented, it will cause negative impacts such as Being in pain, being hard to get income, being dazed, even the death
2.	ES	<i>MbelehLele</i> is a tradition to slaughter a pair of catfish in the	From the ancestors who went to a particular	The tradition is implemented at the night before	Believes that if the tradition is not implemented, it

		night before the marriage contract is held	place to learn magic, SunanKalijaga changed this tradition into preaching media to spread the teaching of Islam	the marriage contract is held, The offering consists of a pair catfish cooked with several special spices, four <i>ambeng</i> (<i>dish</i>) prayed by the religious leader (<i>modin</i>) and the traditional leader.	will have negative impacts such as being unpeaceful, being possessed, being dazed, death
3.	DW	<i>MbelehLele</i> is a tradition to slaughter a pair of catfish in the night before the marriage contract is held	From the ancestors who went to a particular place to learn magic, then SunanKalijaga changes this tradition into preaching media to spread the teaching of Islam (from the elderly information)	Reciting the prayer to the offering	Doesn't believe in a negative impact
4.	KS	<i>MbelehLele</i> is a tradition to slaughter a pair of catfish in the night before the <i>akad</i> is held.	–	Slaughtering catfish at the night before the marriage contract, use to be local catfish	Doesn't believe in a negative impact
5.	WB	<i>MbelehLele</i> is a tradition to slaughter a pair of catfish in the	–	Quite similar to the elderly said	Believe in negative impact such as Being possessed, feels

		night before the <i>akad</i> is held.			like he is followed by something that cannot be seen
6.	SP	<i>MbelehLele</i> is a tradition to slaughter a pair of catfish in the night before the <i>akadis</i> held.	–	Quite similar to the elderly said	Doesn't believe in a negative impact of tradition but afraid of Being gossiped
7.	SD	<i>MbelehLele</i> is a tradition to slaughter a pair of catfish in the night before the <i>akad</i> is held.	–	Quite similar to the elderly said	Doesn't believe in a negative impact of tradition but afraid of Being gossiped
8.	SN	<i>MbelehLele</i> is a tradition to slaughter a pair of catfish in the night before the <i>akad</i> is held.	–	Slaughtering catfish at the night before the marriage contract is held	Doesn't believe in negative impact but afraid of disapproval

After seeing and understanding the data above, it can be seen that those who know the origin of *Mbeleh Lele* tradition in the marriage of the Yogyakarta community are only village elderly. Except for the elderly, no one knows the source of the *Mbeleh Lele* tradition; they only knew it from their elderly and maintained that tradition must be obeyed and always preserved.

Furthermore, the views and beliefs of the people of Yogyakarta towards the *Mbeleh Lele* Tradition are divided into two categories: the prominent figures and the general community. The prominent figures and the colleagues strongly believe in the *Mbeleh Lele* tradition and its adverse effects if this tradition is not implemented. In contrast, the general people are divided into two groups: the believers and the unbelievers. The believers were previously hesitant about the tradition. However, after being affected, they could fully understand the tradition. The second group does not believe in the tradition but still implemented it as a formality to avoid community comments that might be affected to their families and as a form of respect to village elderly who always warn the community to implement *MbelehLele*.

The 'Urf Analysis of *MbelehLele* Tradition

As for the types, the *MbelehLele* tradition can be categorized as an 'urf *'amali*(common activity) in the form of specific actions. In the *MbelehLele* tradition,

it is a public belief that a particular activity must slaughter a pair of catfish on the night before the marriage contract is carried out. As for its coverage, *MbelehLele* tradition can be categorized as an *'urf khas* (unique traditions). It is habits that are applied in a particular area and society. The *MbelehLele* tradition falls into this category because *MbelehLele* tradition will never be found in other regions. Therefore, the *MbelehLele* tradition cannot be included in the category *'urf 'am* (general habits) that apply thoroughly in each area.

To find out whether *'urf* can be used as a legal basis or not, there are Islamic Law rules that explain about *'urf*. Some of them are quranic verse in Al-A'raf: 199: "Take what is given freely, enjoin what is good, and turn away from the ignorant" and the Islamic principle of "The custom could become the law." The branch of this rule is that "The customs that are considered (as legal considerations) are only the customs that are always valid or generally applied (Djazuli, 2011)" They are several requirements to receive the *'urf*. They are as follows. 1) There is no specific argument for the case either in the Al-Quran or Sunnah, 2) The usage does not make the Quranic verse put aside, including also does not cause difficulties and narrowness, and 3) It has been applied generally in the sense that a few people do not usually do it. (Harisuddin, 2016; Aripin, 2016).

Furthermore, the Yogyakarta community's views towards *MbelehLele* tradition are divided into four aspects: the meaning of the tradition, the history of the tradition, the procedure of the tradition, and the impact of the tradition. Those aspects will be compared by the requirements of *'urf* that can be received to be a legal basis. Based on the analysis, the *MbelehLele* tradition can be categorized as the *'urf sahih* (correct tradition) because of several conditions that have met the requirements of *'urf* that can be used as a legal basis. However, on the other side, *MbelehLele* tradition can be categorized as the *'urffasid* (incorrect tradition) because of several conditions that do not meet the requirements as the type of *'urf* which can be made to be a legal basis.

MbelehLele tradition can be categorized as the *'urf sahih* (correct tradition) for several reasons, as follows: 1) There is no specific argument for the meaning, the history, the procedures, and the impact of *MbelehLele* tradition either in the Al-Quran or Sunnah, 2) The meaning, the history, and the processes of *MbelehLele* tradition do not make the Quranic verse put aside, and also does not cause difficulties and narrowness. The reason is that the meaning of the tradition is just the kind of language term, the history of the tradition is just the kind of the transmission of tradition, and the procedures of the tradition are quite simple, 3) The community knows about the meaning and the procedures of the tradition. In terms of its *mudharat* (danger), this tradition caused the community's fear of the negative impacts if the culture is not implemented.

Then this tradition can be categorized as an *'urffasid* (incorrect tradition) for several reasons, i.e., 1) The only one who knows the origin of *MbelehLele* is the traditional leader, 2) The intention in implementing the tradition is to ask for blessings from Sunan Kalijaga (Santoso and Armansyah, 2013) in order to avoid negative impacts after marriage or the tradition indicated the element of *Syirk*

(associating Allah with anything)(Julianto, 2018; Lutfillah, 2019), 3) The tradition caused fear among people who wanted to get married if it was not implemented. From the explanation above, the tradition of *MbelehLele* can be categorized as the '*urf sahiih*' because of several conditions that have met the requirement of '*urf*' that can be used as the legal basis, but on the other side *MbelehLele* tradition can be categorized as the '*urffasid*' because of several conditions that do not meet the requirements as the type of '*urf*' which can be made as a legal basis. If the two categories above are compared to each other, it can be inferred that the requirements of '*urf sahiih*' are more dominant than another one.

Conclusion

The results of this research show that the views of the Yogyakarta community towards the *MbelehLele* Tradition are divided between the elderly figures and the general community. The elderly figures strongly believe that there will be a negative effect if the tradition is not implemented. For other societies, it is divided into two groups, groups that believe and don't believe in tradition. The first group believes in tradition because they were affected by the negative impact. The second group doesn't believe but still implemented it as a formality to avoid community disapproval and as a respect to village elders. In the '*urf*' perspective, the *MbelehLele* tradition can be categorized as the '*urf sahiih*' because it meets the required condition.

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