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THE RECONSTRUCTION OF THE MAHAR TRADITION IN NORTH ACEH FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF *MAQĀSID AL-SYARĪ'AH*: THE DIALECTIC BETWEEN CUSTOMARY LAW AND ISLAMIC LAW

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Abstract

This study examines the tradition of dowry in North Aceh through the perspective of *maqāsid al-syarī'ah* by focusing on the interaction between local customs and Islamic family law. The issue of dowry in Acehese society has undergone significant transformation due to social, cultural, and economic changes that often influence the implementation of marriage. In some cases, the amount of dowry is considered burdensome and has implications for delaying marriage amongst young people. This research aims to analyse the values of *maslahat* inherent in the dowry tradition and to reconstruct its implementation in accordance with the objectives of Islamic law. This study employs qualitative research using a socio-normative approach. Data were obtained through literature reviews, documentation, and analysis of Islamic legal sources, including classical and contemporary literature relating to *maqāsid al-syarī'ah*. The findings reveal that the dowry tradition in North Aceh fundamentally embodies noble values such as respect for women, family dignity and social responsibility. However, a shift in social values has transformed the dowry into a symbol of prestige and social status. From the perspective of *maqāsid al-syarī'ah*, the dowry should prioritise the principles of ease, justice, benefit and the protection of family welfare. Therefore, a reconstruction of the dowry tradition is required, emphasising moderation, local wisdom and the substantive values of Islamic law, so that the practice of marriage remains aligned with the objectives of the *Shari'ah*.

Keywords: , *Mahar*, *Maqāsid al-Syarī'ah*, *Acehese Custom*, *Islamic Family Law*, *Maslahah*

Abstract

This study examines the dowry tradition in North Aceh through the perspective of *maqāsid al-syarī'ah*, focusing on the interaction between local customs and Islamic family law. The issue of dowry in Acehese society has undergone significant transformation due to social, cultural, and economic changes that often influence the conduct of marriages. In some cases, the amount of the dowry is considered burdensome and has led to delays in marriage amongst young people. This study aims to analyse the values of *maslahah* inherent in the dowry tradition and to reconstruct its practice in accordance with the objectives of Islamic law. This study employs a qualitative method with a socio-normative approach. Data were obtained through literature reviews, documentation, and analysis of Islamic legal sources, including classical and contemporary literature relating to *maqāsid al-syarī'ah*. The research findings indicate that the dowry tradition in North Aceh fundamentally embodies noble values such as respect for women, family dignity, and social responsibility. However, a shift in social orientation has transformed

the dowry into a symbol of prestige and social status. From the perspective of *maqāṣid al-syarī'ah*, the dowry should prioritise the principles— —of ease, justice, benefit, and the protection of family welfare. Therefore, a reconstruction of the dowry tradition is required, emphasising moderation, local wisdom, and the substantive values of Islamic law so that the conduct of marriage remains in harmony with the objectives of Sharia.

Keywords: Dowry, Maqāṣid al-Syarī'ah, Acehese Custom, Islamic Family Law, Maslahah

INTRODUCTION

The dowry is one of the key elements of an Islamic marriage, possessing religious, social and cultural dimensions. In Islamic law, the dowry is understood as a mandatory gift from the prospective husband to the prospective wife as a form of respect and a symbol of sincerity in establishing a household. The provisions regarding the dowry are normatively set out in the Qur'an, specifically in Surah an-Nisā': 4

وَأْتُوا النِّسَاءَ صَدُقَاتِهِنَّ نِحْلَةً ۚ فَإِنْ طِبَّنَ لَكُمْ عَنْ شَيْءٍ مِّنْهُ نَفْسًا فَكُلُوهُ هَنِيئًا مَّرِيئًا

Meaning: Give the dowry to the women (whom you marry) as a gift given willingly. Then, if they willingly relinquish part of it to you, accept it and enjoy that gift with a glad heart.

This verse emphasises the obligation to give the dowry to the woman of one's own free will. In practice, the implementation of the dowry has evolved, influenced by the traditions and culture of the local community. (Sabiq, 2004.)

Acehnese society is known for its very strong customary traditions regarding marriage. One of the key elements of these marriage customs is the dowry, which is often linked to social status, family honour, and serves as a symbol of respect for women. In North Aceh, the determination of the dowry takes into account not only Sharia law but is also influenced by economic factors, education, lineage, and the social prestige of the bride's family. This situation has led, in some cases, to the value of the dowry becoming extremely high, thereby giving rise to new issues within the community's social life. (M Husen, Hamdani Hamdani, 2022)

The phenomenon of high dowries has become a focus of attention in various contemporary discourses on Islamic family law. Some members of society regard high dowries as a form of respect for women and their families. However, on the other hand, this practice often causes difficulties for prospective grooms, and may even lead to the postponement of marriages. This situation highlights a tension between customary values and the primary objective of Islamic law, which seeks to facilitate marriage. (Khalil, M., Kuswendi, A., & Kusmawaningsih, 2025)

From the perspective of *maqāṣid al-syarī'ah*, every provision of Islamic law is fundamentally aimed at realising public interest and preventing harm. The concept of *maqāṣid al-syarī'ah*, as developed by both classical and contemporary scholars, emphasises the importance of safeguarding religion, life, reason, lineage and property. The dowry, as part of the marriage system, should not be understood merely as a symbol of material

wealth, but must also be viewed in terms of its benefits for the sustainability of the family and society (Al-Syatibi, n.d.) .

Studies on the dowry have, in fact, been extensively conducted by previous researchers. However, the majority of these studies still focus on the normative aspects of fiqh or are purely sociological in nature. Research integrating the Acehese dowry tradition with the *maqāsid al-syarī'ah* approach remains relatively limited. Therefore, this study is important to examine how the dowry tradition in North Aceh can be reconstructed to preserve customary values whilst remaining in line with the objectives of Islamic law.

This study aims to analyse the practice of the dowry tradition in North Aceh from the perspective of *maqāsid al-syarī'ah*, to identify the values of *maslahat* contained within it, and to propose a model for reconstructing the dowry tradition that is more moderate and relevant to the social development of contemporary society.

METHOD

This is a qualitative study employing a socio-normative approach. The normative approach is used to examine the concept of the dowry in Islamic legal sources, including the Qur'an, hadith, classical fiqh texts, and the views of contemporary scholars on *maqāsid al-syarī'ah*. Meanwhile, the sociological approach is used to understand the practice of the dowry tradition in North Aceh society and the social dynamics that influence it (Khalaf, n.d.)

This research is descriptive-analytical in nature. The descriptive study was conducted by systematically and objectively describing the practice of the dowry in North Aceh society. Subsequently, an analysis was carried out using the theory of *maqāsid al-syarī'ah* to assess the compatibility of this tradition with the objectives of Islamic law.

The data sources for this study consist of primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained from Islamic legal literature relating to dowry and *maqāsid al-syarī'ah*, whilst secondary data were obtained from academic journals, books, legislation, and relevant previous research.

Data collection was carried out through literature review and documentation. All the data obtained were then analysed using content analysis, involving the steps of data reduction, classification, interpretation, and drawing conclusions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Concept of Mahar in Islamic Law

The dowry (*mahar*) is one of the key provisions in Islamic marriage law, holding a highly strategic position in the establishment of a household. Etymologically, the term 'mahar' derives from the Arabic *al-mahr* or *al-shadaq*, meaning a mandatory gift to the woman in the marriage contract. In fiqh terminology, the *mahar* is understood as

property or a benefit that a man is obliged to give to a woman () as a result of a valid marriage contract (

The obligation to pay the dowry has a strong legal basis in the Qur'an. Allah the Almighty states:

وَأْتُوا النِّسَاءَ صَدُقَاتِهِنَّ نِحْلَةً ۗ

Meaning: "Give the women whom you marry their dowries as a gift of goodwill." (Q.S. al-Nisā': 4).

This verse indicates that the dowry is a right of women which must be given with complete sincerity and without any element of coercion. According to Ibn Kathir, the word 'nihlah' in this verse signifies a gift given with full willingness and sincerity of heart, without expecting any specific reward. The dowry is thus not a form of buying and selling women, but rather a symbol of a man's respect and responsibility towards the woman he marries (Kathir, 2011) .

In addition to Surah al-Nisā': 4, the provisions regarding the dowry are also explained in Surah al-Baqarah: 236:

لَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ إِنْ طَلَقْتُمْ النِّسَاءَ مَا لَمْ تَمْسُوهُنَّ أَوْ تَفْرِضُوا لَهُنَّ فَرِيضَةً ۗ

Meaning: "There is no obligation on you to pay the dowry if you divorce your wives before you have consummated the marriage with them and before you have determined the dowry."

This verse emphasises that the dowry is an integral part of the marriage contract. Imam al-Qurthubi explains that this verse highlights the importance of the dowry as a form of honouring women and recognising their rights within marriage: ‘

In the hadith of the Prophet (peace be upon him), the concept of ease regarding the dowry is also strongly emphasised. The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said:

إِنَّ أَعْظَمَ النِّكَاحِ بَرَكَهٌ أَيْسَرُهُ مَوْثِقَةٌ

Meaning: "Verily, the marriage with the greatest blessing is that with the simplest dowry." (Narrated by Ahmad).

This hadith indicates that Islam encourages simplicity in the dowry and prohibits extravagance that may complicate the marriage process. In another narration, the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) once married off a companion with a dowry consisting merely of the recitation of the Qur'an from memory. This hadith serves as evidence that the dowry need not always be of great material value, but may take the form of a benefit of value to the woman (Sabiq, n.d.)

Classical scholars devoted considerable attention to the discussion of the dowry in their books on fiqh. Imam Abu Hanifah held that the minimum dowry was ten dirhams. This view was based on the desire to protect women's honour, so that the dowry would not be given carelessly. Meanwhile, Imam Malik set the minimum limit at three dirhams, whilst Imam Shafi'i and Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal held that there is no minimum limit

for the dowry provided that the item has practical value and is agreed upon by both parties (Az-Zuhaili, 1985) .

Imam al-Shafi'i, in his book **al-Umm**, explains that anything that can be used as consideration in a sale and purchase transaction may also be used as a dowry. This view demonstrates the flexibility of Islamic law in determining the form and value of the dowry in accordance with the social conditions of the community (Asy-syafi'i, 2001) .

Meanwhile, Imam Ibn Qudamah, in his book **al-Mughni**, explains that the primary purpose of the dowry is not its material value, but rather the honouring of women and the strengthening of the marital bond. In his view, a modest dowry given with complete sincerity is preferable to a large dowry that places a heavy burden on the husband (Qudamah, n.d.) .

From the perspective of contemporary scholars, the concept of the dowry continues to be reinterpreted in line with developments in modern society. Yusuf al-Qardhawi emphasises that the dowry must not be used as a means of flaunting social status or as a tool for the economic exploitation of men. The dowry must be understood as a symbol of respect and a form of moral responsibility within married life (Qardhawi, 1993) .

Jasser Auda takes the view that the provisions regarding the dowry must be understood through the *maqāsid al-syarī'ah* approach. In his view, the primary objectives of Islamic law in regulating the dowry are to preserve women's dignity, foster the welfare of the family, and facilitate the establishment of the institution of marriage. Consequently, the practice of demanding an excessively high dowry to the extent that it hinders marriage runs counter to the principles of ease and public welfare in Islam (Auda, 2007) .

A similar view was expressed by Muhammad al-Thahir Ibn 'Asyur, who emphasised that Islamic law always aims to create social balance within society. The dowry must not cause economic disparity or excessive social hardship, as the primary purpose of marriage is to establish tranquillity and ensure the continuity of the family line (Safriadi, 2014) .

In the context of Islamic family law in Indonesia, the Compilation of Islamic Law (KHI) explains that the dowry is a gift from the prospective groom to the prospective bride, whether in the form of goods, money or services, provided it does not contravene Islamic law. This provision indicates that Islamic law in Indonesia allows for flexibility in the form of the dowry in accordance with the social conditions of the community.

The concept of the mahar in Islam is fundamentally based on the principles of respect, justice and the common good. The mahar is not a price for the woman, but rather a symbol of the man's sincerity and responsibility in establishing a household. Therefore, the practice of setting excessively high and onerous mahar amounts needs to be re-examined to ensure it remains in line with the objectives of Islamic law, which emphasises ease and social balance.

The Tradition of the Dowry in North Aceh Society

The tradition of the dowry in North Aceh society is an integral part of the customary marriage system that has been passed down through the generations. In Acehese society, marriage is understood not merely as a relationship between a man and a woman, but also as a social bond between two extended families. Consequently, the process of determining the dowry often involves family deliberations and fairly complex customary considerations (Samad & Munawwarah, 2020)

People in Aceh are familiar with the term 'jeulamee', which refers to the dowry or wedding gift of gold given by the groom's family to the bride. Jeulamee generally takes the form of gold measured in 'mayam', a unit of weight that is a distinctive feature of Acehese culture. The number of mayam given is usually determined by the bride's social status, education, lineage, economic circumstances, and her family's standing within the community (Abdullah, 2022) .

In practice, the determination of the dowry in North Aceh takes into account not only the prospective groom's financial means, but is also closely linked to the dignity of the bride's family. The higher the bride's level of education and social status, the higher the dowry demanded. This has evolved into a social norm within the community and is regarded as a symbol of respect for women.

The tradition of determining the dowry usually takes place during the peusijuek stage, or family consultation, before the marriage ceremony is held. At this stage, the families of both parties will discuss the amount of the dowry, the form of the gift, and other customary costs associated with the wedding celebrations. This consultation process demonstrates that Acehese customs place a high value on family ties and consensus in all social matters (Thaib, 2010) .

In addition to the main dowry, the people of North Aceh also observe a number of additional wedding traditions, such as the 'uang hangus' (a non-refundable payment), the cost of the wedding feast, the provision of household goods, and various other forms of customary assistance. Originally, these traditions were intended to help cover the costs of the wedding celebrations and to strengthen social ties between families. However, with the passage of time, the meaning of some of these traditions has shifted, and they have come to symbolise social prestige.

In rural communities in North Aceh, a high dowry is often seen as a measure of the parents' success in raising their daughter. A high dowry is regarded as enhancing the family's honour in the eyes of the community. Indeed, in some cases, the bride's family fears being looked down upon if they set a low dowry. This phenomenon indicates that the dowry is no longer understood purely as a religious requirement, but has also been influenced by the social constructs of the community (Khalil, M., Kuswendi, A., & Kusmawaningsih, 2025)

On the other hand, the tradition of high dowries has also given rise to a number of social issues. Many young men in North Aceh find it difficult to marry due to financial constraints in meeting the demands for dowries and customary fees. It is not uncommon for male prospective grooms to have to work for years or migrate to other regions in order to raise the funds for the wedding. There have even been cases of weddings being postponed due to the groom's lack of financial readiness.

This phenomenon indicates a shift in the purpose of the dowry. Whilst the dowry originally served as a symbol of respect and responsibility, in modern society it is often seen as a symbol of social status and family prestige. This shift has been influenced by modernisation, consumer culture, social media and increasing social competition within society.

From the perspective of the sociology of Islamic law, the dowry tradition in North Aceh reflects the dynamic relationship between adat and Sharia. Adat, as a local value system, exerts a strong influence on the practice of Islamic family law within the community. Aceh itself is known for the principle of "hukom ngon adat lagee zat ngon sifeut", which means that law and adat are two inseparable elements. This principle demonstrates that Acehnese society seeks to integrate the values of Islamic Sharia with local culture in everyday life (Safiuddin et al., 2023)

Nevertheless, Islam stipulates that customs are acceptable provided they do not conflict with the principles of Sharia. A rule of fiqh states:

العَادَةُ مُحْكَمَةٌ

Meaning: "Customs may be taken into account in legal matters."

This principle indicates that custom holds an important position in Islamic law provided it serves the public interest. Therefore, the dowry tradition in North Aceh can, in principle, be preserved as part of the local cultural identity; however, its practice needs to be guided so as not to cause social and economic hardship.

Aceh's religious scholars generally also emphasise the importance of maintaining a balance between customary law and Islamic law in marriage practices. In their view, a dowry that is so high as to hinder marriage runs counter to the principle of ease in Islam. In many sermons and religious study sessions, the scholars frequently remind the community that the blessings of a marriage are not determined by the size of the dowry, but rather by the religious devotion and moral character of the husband and wife.

In the context of *maqāsid al-syarī'ah*, the Acehnese dowry tradition actually embodies a number of positive values, such as respect for women, social responsibility and the strengthening of family ties. However, when this tradition becomes a means of social competition and causes hardship for the community, a re-evaluation of its interpretation is required so that the practice of the dowry once again aligns with the objectives of Islamic law.

This reconstruction does not mean erasing Aceh's local traditions, but rather restoring the essence of the dowry as a symbol of respect and responsibility within marriage. Thus, Acehnese customs can be preserved without compromising the

principles of ease, justice and the public good, which are the primary objectives of Islamic law.

An Analysis of the Dowry Tradition from the Perspective of *Maqāsid al-Syarī'ah*

The *maqāsid al-syarī'ah* approach to analysing the phenomenon of the dowry in North Aceh essentially views Islamic law not merely as a set of normative rules, but as a value system oriented towards the achievement of the overall welfare of humanity. Within this framework, the dowry cannot be understood merely as a formal *fiqh* obligation within the marriage contract, but rather as a social instrument that has a direct impact on family stability, social structure and generational continuity. Therefore, an analysis of *maqāsid* is essential to assess the extent to which the dowry practices that have developed in North Aceh remain consistent with the fundamental objectives of Sharia, or whether they have deviated as a result of evolving social constructs within the community (Al-Syatibi, n.d.)

Theoretically, al-Syatibī asserts that all provisions of Sharia law are rooted in the preservation of the five essential elements (*al-adrūriyyāt al-khams*), namely the protection of religion, life, reason, lineage and property. In the context of marriage, the dowry (mahar) is directly linked to *hifẓ al-nasl* and *hifẓ al-māl*. '*Hifẓ al-nasl*' relates to the continuity of lineage through the formation of a legitimate family, whilst '*hifẓ al-māl*' concerns the proportionate management of wealth within the marriage process. When the dowry is set at an excessive level, it no longer functions as a means of protection but instead has the potential to become a factor hindering the formation of a family (Al-Syatibi, n.d.) .

Within the context of North Acehnese society, the dowry tradition—known as *jeulamee*—essentially embodies respect for women and symbolises the man's responsibility. However, in social practice, there has been a significant shift in its meaning. The dowry is no longer understood merely as a form of respect, but also as an indicator of social status and family honour. This shift reflects a social process that is shaping new standards in the determination of the dowry, which often do not fully take into account the man's economic capacity. In many cases, this has led to an increase in the age at marriage and delays in the marriage process (Rizki, 2020) .

When analysed from the perspective of contemporary *maqāsid al-syarī'ah*, this phenomenon reveals an imbalance between normative texts and social reality. Jasser Auda emphasises that *the maqāsid* must be understood through a *systems approach*, whereby Islamic law cannot be separated from its surrounding social context. Consequently, every legal practice, including the dowry (mahar), must be evaluated based on the extent to which it supports the attainment of public interest (*maslahah*) or, conversely, gives rise to harm (*mafsadah*) within society'. In this context, the practice of demanding an excessively high dowry to the extent that it hinders marriage can be categorised as a deviation from the objectives of *the maqāsid*.

From the perspective of *hifẓ al-nasl*, a disproportionately high dowry has the potential to delay or even prevent marriage. This situation affects not only individuals but also the wider social structure, as a delay in marriage can impact family stability and

the continuity of future generations. Meanwhile, from the perspective of *hifẓ al-māl*, the economic burden imposed by a high dowry can create significant financial pressure for the prospective groom and his family, and in some cases even lead to social inequality within society (Tohari & Kholish, 2020).

Furthermore, *maqāsid al-syarī‘ah* also emphasises the principle of ease (*taisīr*) in every aspect of Islamic law, including marriage. This principle is explicitly reflected in the Prophet’s hadith, which encourages simplicity in the dowry and identifies ease as an indicator of a marriage’s blessing. Consequently, practices regarding the dowry that actually cause hardship run counter to the very spirit of Sharia itself. Within this framework, the dowry should not serve as a means of imposing a social burden, but should remain within the bounds of respect and ease (.

Furthermore, the principle of justice (*‘adālah*) within *the maqāsid* also demands that the dowry should not be used as a means of creating excessive social stratification. When the dowry is determined excessively on the basis of the woman’s social status, education or family prestige, this has the potential to give rise to social discrimination that runs counter to the principle of equality in Islam. In this regard, Ibn ‘Asyur emphasises that Islamic law is always oriented towards social balance and does not condone practices that widen the gap between social groups: ‘.

The principle of public interest (*maslahah*) within *the maqāsid* also provides an important foundation for evaluating the practice of the dowry in North Aceh. Ideally, the dowry serves as a means of supporting the formation of a family characterised by *sakinah*, *mawaddah* and *rahmah*. However, when the dowry actually becomes an obstacle to marriage, the value of its public interest must be re-examined. In such circumstances, a reinterpretation of the dowry practice is required so that it returns to its original purpose as an instrument of public interest, rather than as a social burden (Yusuf Qardhawi, 1993).

The principle of *wasathiyyah* (moderation) also serves as an important foundation for the reconstruction of the dowry tradition. Moderation in this context means striking a balance between customary values and the guidance of Sharia law. Acehese customs, which uphold women’s honour, can still be preserved, but must be balanced with the awareness that Islam has never set burdensome standards for the dowry. Thus, the balance between local cultural values and the principles of Islamic law is key to maintaining the continuity of the tradition without compromising the objectives of Islamic law—.

Overall, the *maqāṣid* analysis indicates that the dowry tradition in North Aceh occupies a dialectical position between the ideal values of Sharia and the social realities of the community. On the one hand, the dowry embodies positive values such as respect for women and the strengthening of the family institution. However, on the other hand, when its value inflates due to social pressures and the pursuit of cultural prestige, it has the potential to deviate from the Sharia’s ‘ ’ objectives. Therefore, a reconstructive approach is required—one that is not merely normative, but also sociological and

contextual—to ensure that the practice of the dowry remains in line with the principle of public interest in Islam .

A Reconstruction of the Dowry Tradition in North Aceh

The reconstruction of the dowry tradition in North Aceh is essentially an effort to restore the substantive function of the dowry in accordance with the objectives of Islamic Sharia, without eliminating the local cultural values that have been passed down through generations within the community. Reconstruction in this context is not intended as a form of abolition of customary law, but rather as a process of adaptation and revitalisation of cultural values so that they remain relevant to the principle of public interest in Islamic law. From the perspective of Islamic law, custom holds an important position provided it does not conflict with Sharia, as per the fiqh principle stating that *al-'adah muhakkamah* (customs may serve as a basis for legal consideration). Therefore, the dowry tradition in North Aceh can be preserved as part of the community's cultural identity, but its implementation must be guided so as not to cause social or economic hardship for the community (Khalaf, n.d.) .

Historically, the tradition of the dowry in Acehese society arose from a social culture that held women and their families in high regard. The dowry, or *jeulamee*, was seen as a symbol of a man's commitment to establishing a household and as a form of respect for a woman's dignity. However, modern social developments have led to a transformation of values in the practice of the dowry. The dowry, which was originally oriented towards respect and responsibility, has become a symbol of social prestige and a measure of a family's economic status. Consequently, communities often set high dowry standards based on a woman's level of education, lineage, occupation and social position. This phenomenon indicates that the practice of the dowry has shifted from a spiritual orientation towards a materialistic one (Habiburrahman, 2025) .

From the perspective of *maqāsid al-syarī'ah*, this situation requires a re-evaluation so that the practice of the dowry once again aligns with the primary objectives of Islamic law. Such a re-evaluation is essential because Islamic law is fundamentally based on the principles of ease (*taisir*) and public interest (*maslahah*). Islam does not condone social practices that cause undue hardship in marriage. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) explicitly emphasised the importance of simplicity in the dowry, as stated in the hadith:

إِنَّ أَعْظَمَ النِّكَاحِ بَرَكَهٌ أَيْسَرُهُ مُؤْنَةً

Meaning: “Verily, the marriage with the greatest blessing is that with the simplest dowry.” (Narrated by Ahmad).

This hadith indicates that the measure of blessing in marriage does not lie in the size of the dowry, but rather in the ease, sincerity and moral readiness of the couple to build a household. Therefore, the tradition of a dowry that is excessively high to the point of hindering marriage runs counter to the fundamental spirit of Islamic teachings

(Qudamah, 1997.)

The reconstruction of the dowry tradition in North Aceh also needs to be carried out through educational and cultural approaches. In Acehese society, traditional leaders and religious scholars hold a highly strategic position in shaping the community's social outlook. Therefore, a paradigm shift regarding the dowry cannot be achieved through formal legal approaches alone, but must be achieved through the internalisation of Sharia values into the social life of the community. Dakwah, religious study circles, sermons and Islamic family education need to be directed towards building awareness that a woman's dignity is not measured by the size of her dowry, but rather by the quality of her character, knowledge and piety. In this way, the community can understand that the dowry is merely a symbol of respect, not a means of demonstrating a family's social superiority (Yusuf Qardhawi, 1993) .

Furthermore, any reform of the dowry system must take into account the socio-economic conditions of contemporary society. The high cost of living, rising education costs and economic instability mean that many young people struggle to meet the demands of the dowry and the costs of marriage. In some cases, prospective grooms must work for years or migrate to other regions in order to meet the evolving social standards within society. This situation indicates that the dowry practice no longer functions entirely as a symbol of respect, but has transformed into a social pressure that burdens the lower-middle class (Tohari & Kholish, 2020) .

From the perspective of *maqāsid al-syari'ah*, such circumstances may undermine the protection of *hifz al-nasl* and *hifz al-māl*. Exorbitant dowries have the potential to delay marriage, thereby affecting the continuity of future generations and the social stability of the community. On the other hand, an excessive economic burden may also cause financial hardship for the groom and his family. Therefore, the reform of dowry traditions must be directed towards striking a balance between respect for women and the realistic economic capacity of the community (Al-Syatibi, n.d.)

Within the context of Acehese culture, the reconstruction of the dowry tradition does not mean abolishing the use of gold mayam or other traditional symbols. These cultural elements can still be preserved as part of the Acehese people's identity. However, the determination of the dowry amount should be based on the principle of moderation (*wasathiyah*) and mutual agreement that does not place an undue burden on either party. The principle of moderation is essential to ensure that custom continues to coexist harmoniously with the objectives of Islamic law. In other words, custom is preserved as a cultural heritage, whilst its substance is directed towards the values of public interest and social justice (.

The dowry system can also be reformed by revitalising the value of consultation in the marriage process. In Acehese tradition, the dowry is essentially determined through family consultation that upholds the spirit of consensus. However, in modern practice, such consultation is often influenced by social prestige and pressure from the wider community. Therefore, family deliberation needs to be restored to the spirit of

kinship and the common good, rather than being driven solely by social prestige. In this way, the process of determining the dowry can proceed in a more prudent and proportionate manner (Akbar & Sainun, 2024) .

The role of local government and religious institutions is also vital in supporting the reform of dowry traditions. The Aceh government, together with the Ulama Consultative Council (MPU), traditional leaders and religious institutions, can draw up social guidelines on simple marriage practices that are in line with Sharia law and Acehnese culture. These guidelines are not intended to abolish customs, but to provide social education so that the community does not become trapped in a culture of consumerism and social competition surrounding marriage. This step is important given that the culture of lavish celebrations and high dowries is often influenced by social pressures arising in modern society (Amir Syarifuddin, 2011) .

From the perspective of contemporary Islamic family law, the reconstruction of the dowry tradition is also part of the renewal of Islamic law in response to changing times. The *maqāsid al-syarī'ah* approach allows Islamic law to remain flexible without losing its fundamental values. Jasser Auda explains that Islamic law must be understood contextually, taking into account the social realities of society. Thus, the reconstruction of the dowry in North Aceh is a form of social *ijtihad* aimed at maintaining the relevance of Sharia in modern society (Auda, 2007)

Ultimately, the reconstruction of the dowry tradition in North Aceh must be directed towards restoring the essence of marriage as an act of worship and a means of building a family characterised by *sakinah*, *mawaddah* and *rahmah*. The dowry must not be viewed as a tool for creating social stratification or a symbol of excessive luxury. Rather, the dowry must continue to be understood as a form of respect given with sincerity and responsibility. With this approach, Acehnese customs can be preserved as a local cultural identity whilst harmonising with the universal objectives of Islamic law, which emphasise ease, justice and the welfare of the community.

CONCLUSION

The tradition of the dowry in North Aceh society is an important part of the customary marriage system, which is inseparable from the social, cultural and religious values of the Acehnese people. From the perspective of Islamic law, the dowry is, in essence, a form of respect and responsibility on the part of the man towards the woman within the bonds of marriage; it is not a means of transaction or a symbol of luxury. The Qur'an, the hadith, and the views of classical and contemporary scholars indicate that Islam places the dowry within a framework of ease, justice and the common good. Therefore, the dowry should not become a burden that hinders the realisation of marriage.

This study reveals that the practice of the dowry in North Aceh has undergone a shift in meaning due to the influence of social constructs within the community. The

dowry, which originally served as a symbol of respect for women and the strengthening of family ties, has, in the context of modern society, often transformed into a symbol of social status, family prestige and a measure of economic success. The determination of the amount of jeulamee, based on a woman's education, lineage, occupation, and social standing, has led to high dowry values in some communities. This situation ultimately gives rise to various social problems, such as the postponement of marriages, increased economic pressure on prospective grooms, and the emergence of a culture of social competition in the conduct of marriages.

From the perspective of *maqāsid al-syarī'ah*, the dowry tradition in North Aceh essentially embodies values of public interest, particularly in safeguarding women's honour, strengthening social bonds, and fostering family responsibility. However, when the practice of the dowry becomes an excessive social and economic burden, it contradicts the objectives of Islamic law, which emphasise the principles of ease (*taisīr*), justice (*'adālah*), moderation (*wasathīyyah*), and the public good (*maṣlaḥah*). Disproportionately high dowries also have the potential to undermine the protection of *hiḡz al-nasl* and *hiḡz al-māl*, as they can hinder the formation of families and cause economic hardship within the community.

Therefore, the reconstruction of the dowry tradition in North Aceh is a crucial step towards restoring the essence of the dowry in accordance with the objectives of Islamic Sharia without eroding the local cultural identity of the Acehnese people. This reconstruction must be carried out through educational, cultural and social approaches, involving religious scholars, traditional leaders, religious institutions and the local government. The jeulamee tradition and other customary symbols can still be preserved as part of Aceh's cultural heritage; however, their implementation must be guided by the principles of simplicity, balance and the community's economic capacity.

Thus, harmony between custom and Sharia can continue to be maintained in the marriage practices of the people of North Aceh. The dowry is no longer understood as a tool for creating social stratification, but returns to its primary function as a symbol of respect, sincerity and responsibility in building a family characterised by *sakinah*, *mawaddah* and *rahmah*, in accordance with the universal objectives of Islamic Sharia.

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