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Between Islam and Custom: The Role of Pigs in Dani Muslim Weddings

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ABSTRACT

In diverse Indonesia, the use of pigs as dowry in Dani Muslim marriages is a culturally significant practice; it serves as a powerful medium of confluence between Islam and local custom. Although pork consumption is considered haram in Islam, Dani Muslims still raise pigs and use them in various rituals. This article specifically discusses the cultural reasons for using pigs as dowry in Dani Muslim marriages. The data used for analyses were collected through ethnographic methods, including observations, interviews, and literature study. The study findings show that Dani Muslims use pigs as matrimonial dowry on account of three underlying reasons. First, a cultural reason in which pigs are considered an inseparable part of Dani culture and regarded to have close cultural ties with human beings, where they are even viewed as a sacred animal. Second, a political reason wherein pigs serve as power of identity that can be employed as a tool of intertribal diplomacy and conflict resolution. Third, an economic reason in which pigs hold a significant function for maintaining the tribe's daily life sustenance and as a tool of transactions, particularly for paying dowries. This article emphasizes that the use of pigs as dowry is a middle ground in the attempt at combining two practices: religious and customary. The resilience of Dani Muslims in preserving their custom of using pigs proved dilemmatic when they face conditions imposed by their professed religion, i.e., pigs are prohibited by Islam.

Keywords: Local Tradition, Muslim Wedding, Pigs in Islam, Religion and Culture.

Pigs, an animal that has been declared haram for use in Islam, is instead being utilized in the marital procession of Dani Muslims. The legal status of swine is firmly stipulated in several verses of the Quran such as QS. Al-Baqarah (2:173), Al-Maidah (4:3), and Al-An'am (6:145), along with An-Nahl (16: 115). In the fourth verse, the term *khinzir* refers to pig's meat (pork), which is prohibited for consumption. In one of the hadith, narrated by Imam Ahmad and Abu Daud, the prohibition of using pigs is also emphasized. The hadith highlighted that "Allah Glorified and

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Exalted has cursed pigs, eating it, and giving it unto others". In terms of normative text, the prohibition of pigs is focused on the consumption of its meat (pork). Nonetheless, this remains a debate among ulama. There are those who interpret *lahm hinzir* (swine meat) textually, making only the meat being haram. Meanwhile, *jumhur* ulama (consensus of Islamic scholars) claim that all parts of the pig are haram for Muslims to use. This is based upon the argument that *lahm hinzir* specifically indicates the largest part of the physical body of the pig that is prohibited to use and it represents the prohibition of other body parts. This argument is asserted by Syahabuddin Mahmud Al-Alusi (Nurmansyah 2020).

Discussions regarding pigs and their various aspects have constantly been grounds for debates. In Islamic studies, for instance, *najis* (ritually unclean or impure) and purity or cleanliness of pigs have always been emerging issues (Jones 2017). Baratta (2021) even likened the use of pigs as a form of anger and defiance against God's command. Long before Baratta highlights pigs, Brien & Wessell (2010) reiterate pigs' presence as a dirty, greedy, brutal, and obscene animal hence considering it a symbol of defiance against morals and ethics taught by religion. This is in line with explanations given by the Quran to reject and prohibit Muslim communities from raising and consuming pigs (Hendrickx et al. 2019). Explanations in the Quran have shown that pork and anything that is not slaughtered in the name of Allah are haram because they affect our physical health (Ghaffari 2014).

In several classical literature, like *Minhaj al-Talibin*, it is stated that pigs (and dogs) are unclean animals and known as *najis* among other animals in this world (Kasan et al. 2016). Esias E Meyer (2011) supports the argument by explaining that pigs in the Book of Leviticus are categorized as dirty or unclean. Many ulama also argue that the use of pigs is haram in general. There are those who allow the use of some parts of the pig such as the hair, which can be used as thread to sow leather, but this is only allowed under certain circumstances when no other materials can be used. However, in the context of today's Muslim life, swine products are replaceable by other media that have no haram element, for items such as thread, rope, and other tools that are only needed for tying things.

In addition to the various religion-based proofs and arguments on the prohibition of using pigs, there are also agreeing arguments found in modern science, particularly in the field of medicine. Although in certain conditions pigs' body part is used to replace a person's damaged bodily organ via a transplantation process (Putri et al. 2021), several study results indicate that pig meat contains high level of back fat that can easily experience oxidative rancidity, which, due to the chemical structure, makes the meat unfit for consumption. The prohibition of consuming pork is also based on the disease content found in them (Ingram & Legge 1970). Several diseases are carried in the body of a pig such as tapeworms and other hazardous bacteria (Meurens et al. 2012), pigs also serve as a medium for disease transmission. Some of the diseases that pigs may transmit include, among others, hardened arteries, high-blood pressure, acute chest pain, and joint pain. Porcine DNA, which is considered similar to human, has the potential to pass on the poor features of the pig to humans, and pigs are even seen as a "disease container" carrying diseases like swine flu. Danger to the swine population may also occur by means of transmission such as the African Swine Fever (ASF), a transmissible animal disease, when there is open market for swine trade (Bulu et al. 2022).

From a socio-cultural perspective, pigs in certain communities are regarded as media for maintaining traditions. Pigs are mostly used as game animal involving many participants. As an example, the people of Nagari Limo Kaum, Tanah Datar, West Sumatra, hunt pigs every week to preserve the custom of their ancestors, although such activities do result in having less time with the family. The time spent for hunting pigs takes a portion of the time that should be spent with family. Pigs are also raised for various reasons, either as livestock or to be used for customary ceremonies. Pigs are even used to pay for customary fines such as adultery, murder, and theft (Irwandi et al. 2022). Despite having several benefits, there are several negative aspects of pigs like their extremely gluttonous nature, preference in consuming carcasses or their own feces even

human feces, and pigs also like to dwell in humid and dirty places, and they are also considered destroyers or raiders of vegetable crops.

Starting with the contestation over how pigs are defined from the perspectives of Islam, health, and culture, pigs are considered an animal with numerous issues or *mudharat* (harm, disadvantage) for human life that resulted in their prohibition of use. Using pigs under emergency circumstances is possible, even allowed, although in a restricted manner. Pigs can be used as objects of research, hence the use of porcine elements for producing vaccines, the organs may even be used as a replacement of damaged human organ through a transplantation process (Putri et al. 2021). Use of pigs among Muslims who are not under emergency conditions, as is the case of marriages among Dani Muslims, is a rare event. The Dani still continues to maintain their custom of using pigs as marriage dowry, although many other alternative materials can be used to replace them. In this case, despite the haram status of pigs, they are still regarded as an animal of significance in the ritual procession of their custom, even religion (Delfi 2013).

One of the key questions regarding the use of pigs among Dani Muslims is why pigs are still being used as dowry while they are in fact considered haram in Islam and a hazard to human life according to health science outlook. The pig's haram status actually demonstrates the numerous threats this animal pose to human life. The various statements arguing the many dangers pigs may pose are not applicable to Dani Muslims who actually consider pigs one of the most important factors in religious practice, particularly as a dowry in marriage. The complexity between religion, health, and culture in using pigs as dowry in a Muslim community is a crucial issue to understand in order to obtain a broader perspective about the relational dynamics between religion and specific local culture that applies in a community.

The study conducted and presented in this article differs from the focus of earlier studies that consider pigs as an animal full of controversy. The controversy is not only observed at the religious normative-textual level, but at the practical-contextual level among the public. In religious texts, pigs are considered an animal with numerous hazards for human and the environment making it forbidden for consumption or other interests. This context served as a basis to provide specific and comprehensive explanations about the reasons Dani Muslims still use pigs for marriage dowry. The current article is based on the argument that the use of pigs among Dani Muslims does not only demonstrate their commitment to their custom, but it is also an effort of moderation to combine Islam and culture into one single religious practice.

Research Methodology

This article is the result of a study conducted on Dani Muslims in the kampong or village of Walesi, Wamena Regency, Central Papua in the 2023-2024 period. The choice of Dani Muslims as the focus of our study is based upon the following three factors. *First*, Dani Muslims are a small religious group. Dani Muslim population settle in areas that are far from the hustle and bustle of modern urban life. *Second*, Dani Muslims face various obstacles as a result of their choice to embrace Islam. One of the obstacles they encounter is difficulty in gaining support that facilitates their religious activities such as the lack of worship facilities and infrastructure. *Third*, Dani Muslims still practice religious activities that differ from Muslims in general. Dani Muslims maintain a number of ancient traditions such as raising and using pigs for religious activities, e.g., marriage dowry.

Data analyzed in this article were collected through observations, interviews, and literature study. Observations were carried out by examining the daily activities of Dani Muslims. Every day, the Dani men are active on the field and they are assisted by the women. In their homes they have a special place for the livestock they raise. These livestock animals have several functions, i.e., to sell and provide household needs and to be used for customary ceremonies. Interviews were carried out with several individuals, including tribal head, elderlies, and youths. The interviews were focused on their conception of Islam, which is a religion they professed to long after Islam's introduction throughout Indonesia. There were several questions raised

relating to the presence and status of pigs in their life. The data collected from these two sources were subsequently reinforced by literature study. The literature study was done to justify the data collected during observations and interviews. These three techniques were employed to secure solid data, particularly data relating to the presence of Dani Muslim community and the life dynamics they encounter.

The collected data were then categorized into groups based on the respective propensities. Observation data were narrated and made to set the article. As for the interview data, they are presented as direct quotes narrated in the manuscript. The narratives and quotes written in the manuscript were then bolstered with relevant literary support in order to form a comprehensive review. Not all data obtained on the field were narrated in the present article. The authors simply elaborate the observation results concisely and cite only some of the relevant quotes. The results collected from the field and from the literature study were combined in such a way to produce a more thorough article narrative. In this case, results of research by experts confirmed the field findings we acquired, making the discussion more robust and comprehensive. Subsequently, the mapped data were further analyzed using an inductive approach aimed at providing a basis for data interpretation. The interpretation process began by contextualizing the data, which was aligned with the most recent conditions and social context of Dani Muslims.

Dowry in Islamic Texts and Contexts

Dowry (*mahar*) in Islam is defined as a gift, either material or immaterial, given by the groom to the bride and it is a precondition of marriage (Diamond-Smith et al 2020:10; Sofyan 2019:1; Kafi 2020:2; Makino 2019:1). *Mahar* holds a profound significance in Islam, wherein the dowry given to a bride is not considered a transactional price of the woman's self-worth, it is perceived more as a factor in the reciprocal interaction that places the groom in a status of leadership within the household (Kohar 2016:42; Barkah 2014:1). *Mahar* is nothing but a symbol of man's responsibility to woman's survival in a marriage (Puspitorini et al. 2018:251) while strengthening the position of women among society (Maloko et al. 2024). The provision on dowry is also stipulated in Qs. An-Nisa' verse 4, stating that the decision of what the dowry should be is based on the agreement of both parties (Sopyan & Asyraf 2018:12).

Mahr is categorized into two, namely *mahr musamma* (stated during the marriage contract or solemnization ceremony) and *mahr mitsil* (not stated during the solemnization ceremony) (Khoirin 2018:562). Additionally, *mahr* can also paid by cash or credit, which in cases of dowry 'credit' repayment (Golshani et al 2020:1) the terms must be determined and immediately paid off once the spouses engage in conjugal intercourse. In Islam, the wife is considered the owner of the dowry, and she can accept the entire gift, give her agreement of the dowry, and allow her husband the latitude not to pay off the dowry 'credit' (Jafar 1970; Abbas et al. 2018). *Mahar* is a voluntary gift from the groom to his wife-to-be as a token of love and affection for establishing their household (Halomoan 2015). *Mahar*, although it is a pillar of marriage, remains significant since it not only indicates the conferring of a gift to one's future wife, but it also signifies a strong relationship fostered between the two individuals.

Abd. Kafi (2020) in his study found two *mahr* trends. *First*, the use of religious symbols as dowries, which was a trend in 1990 up to the 2000s. The use of religious symbols as dowries is an inseparable part of the religious resurgence global trend, which was why the longing for religious touch was displayed within the frame of marital dowries. As we at times witness today, a person may use religious properties like a *rukana* (women's prayer dress in Indonesia), the Holy Quran, tasbeih (prayer beads), even Quran memorization as marriage dowries not only to demonstrate sincerity, but also economic status and prestige (Tilawati 2019:22-34; Irawan & Jayusman 2019:1). *Second*, a *mahr* trend that is adjusted to respective regions and locations (Kafi 2020). One of the more unique practices of *mahr* giving is observed among Muslims residing in the highlands of Papua, i.e., pigs, considered haram in Islam, are in fact given by men to women as an obligatory marriage dowry (Yelepele & Hefni 2012:1). This is unlike the trend of cash *mahr*

found in South Kalimantan (Iqbal & Sudirman 2020:1; Sopyan & Asyraf 2018:1), and it is also different from the *mahr* trend in Minangkabau that highlights religious symbols (Kafi 2020:23). In Muslim communities that maintain the social status of the extended family, *mahr* is often standardized for the pride of the family, although for the wider public this may lead to unaffordability of *mahr*.

In cases where pigs are used as dowry in a Muslim community, various controversies need to be understood and elaborated. Amidst a controversial perspective, pigs are considered the ideal model to understand not only human development, but also human diseases (Gabriel, et al. 2022). There are anatomical, physiological, measurement, and genomic similarities between humans and pigs that allow the utility of porcine models. However, when referring to the religious approach, some religions categorize pigs as prohibited and haram. As shown in the study by Aniceti & Albarella (2022) that during the Islamic period the reflection of socio-cultural acceptance to religious teaching or value has an impact on the use of pigs, be it for consumption, medication, and even certain ritual. The concept of haram and halal in Islamic law is used to explain the status of pigs in the community (Rohman & Windarsih 2020). A study by Zainuddin & Zulkifli (2019) also provides an outline regarding pig hunting activity performed by Muslims for various purposes. The pig hunt also resulted in controversies about its status in relation to tradition, religion, and even the environment. Hunting pigs is not considered positive from the perspective of compliance to religious law.

Under certain conditions, various social, religious, and cultural factors play a role in determining whether pigs should be allowed for utilization or otherwise. In the use of drugs, for instance, Karim & Khan (2018) assert that these factors require considerations and knowledge to decide whether the medication or treatment given honors the belief or value of a religion. Under a state of emergency, the use of anything including pigs for the benefit of humankind is allowed. During the pandemic, for example, Islamic ethics and law allowed the use of vaccine despite its porcine content (Padela et al. 2014). In this case, Islam prohibits the consumption of pork in any form unless it is to save a person's life or under life threatening conditions (Zailani et al. 2023) or what is normally considered a state of emergency. There are several verses in the Quran explaining when the consumption of something haram or forbidden is allowed during emergency situations or compelled by necessity.

"But if someone is compelled by necessity—neither driven by desire nor exceeding immediate need—they will not be sinful. Surely Allah is All-Forgiving, Most Merciful" (al-Quran, Al Baqarah 2:173).

"Why should you not eat of what is slaughtered in Allah's Name when He has already explained to you what He has forbidden to you—except when compelled by necessity?" (al-Quran, Al-An'am 6: 119).

In the case of saving human life, most ulama accept the idea of porcine xenograft and do not see it contradicting with their belief, since it is perceived as a life-saving therapy (Hurst et al. 2022). This is based on the need of urgent interest, i.e., an effort to achieve beneficial well-being. Nonetheless, Islam only allows the use of anything including pigs under states of emergency in a restricted manner. This is in line with the *fiqh* principle of "nothing is forbidden during an emergency" and "emergencies cause the permissibility of things that are forbidden".

The Use of Pig as Dowry: Another Shade of Islamic Practice in Indonesia?

Dani Muslims are a community of the Dani tribe residing in the Lembah Baliem Highlands. Geographically speaking, Lembah Baliem is located in Wamena, Jayawijaya Regency at ±1,600 m MSL and is surrounded by mountains. Data from Papua's Statistical Bureau in 2020 shows that the Muslim population in Jayawijaya Regency totaled 9,875 people, while Dani Muslims were as many as 1,051 people (Yamin et.al 2019). This is a very small population in comparison to other

religious communities in the region, particularly Protestants at 117,703 people and Catholics as many as 113,702 people. The Dani tribe itself consists of several clans, i.e., small clan and big clan (Yelepele & Hefni 2011). Small clans comprise people who claim that they are descendants of ancestors who are less than 5 generations apart. The ancestors of these clans are still remembered by the current generation. As for the big clan, it is a collective of clans coming from different territories. Their ancestors are no longer recognized due to their generational proximity being too far apart with this clan.

Islam was initially introduced to Wamena in 1968 along with the wave of transmigrants coming from Java. The people of Dani only began professing Islam as their religion circa 1975-1977 (Yamin 2011; Yelepele & Hefni 2012). Dani Muslims—who are dispersed in villages of Pasema, Air Garam, Hitigima, Megapura, Yagara, Walaik, Pua, Okilik, Ibele, Araboda, Mapenduma, Kurulu Pukima, up to the Papua's Central Highlands—including “young Muslims” still recall the time Islam was introduced as a relatively recent belief. In their current daily life habit, they always try to align between customary and religious demands. Among the Dani tribe, the community is divided into two main groups, namely those that must maintain customs and those that must try to perform religious teachings (Yamin 2011). Concurrently, when we observe the daily life practices of the community, it is apparent that a mixture or even fusion between custom and religion is taking place within a single residential compound, and it is reflected in their daily life practices.

Pigs as the most venerated animal continue to be animals they must breed and raise on account of the religious, economic, and social values they maintain, although the raising of these pigs is mostly done in traditional dwellings in kampongs. Activities such as inflicting self-harm on the body as a form of mourning is still practiced by the older generation to express grief and a sense of loss. While simultaneously, efforts to perform Islamic shariah are also expressed by the younger generation, particularly those who have received an education. They also wear Muslim attires like *kopiah* (Muslim cap) and jilbab. Such spectacles can be witnessed in Muslim Dani villages today. What is demonstrated by this community affirms what Joel Robbins (2017) considers the duplex dynamics of cultural change. Dani Muslims continue to practice Islamic teachings despite of their limitations and differences in Islamic practices compared to other Muslims caused by the strong customs upheld among the Dani tribe. In this case, they are in a complex cultural dynamic since on the one hand they are preserving their original culture, while on the other they are practicing Islamic teachings, which are a cultural novelty in their environment.

The Sharia Dilemma in Cultural Practice

Pigs, or *wam* in the local Papuan language, are explicitly forbidden in the Quran, a foundational principle in Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*). Islamic scholars unanimously agree that all parts of the pig are considered ritually impure (*najis*) and prohibited for consumption or utilization, including in health and industrial products (Imron & Muallifah 2025; Devriese & De Smet 2018). Imam Shafi'i, as well as the Hanbali and Hanafi schools of thought (*mazhab*), declare that all parts of the pig are impure. Conversely, Imam Malik opines that living pigs are inherently pure because the original state of all living beings is purity, a more lenient view. Beyond consumption, the majority of scholars also prohibit the sale of pigs due to their status as impure commodities (Abdullah 2020). However, in emergency situations where human life is at stake, the principle of *darurah* (necessity) permits its use if there is no alternative (Zailani et al. 2023; Bokek-Cohen & Tarabeih 2022).

Some contemporary scholars also consider the concept of *istihalah* (transformation of substance), which allows a prohibited substance (*haram*) to become permissible (*halal*) if it has undergone a complete chemical transformation (Padela et al. 2014; Imron & Muallifah 2024). Despite this legal flexibility in medical contexts, the limited understanding of these principles among Muslim communities often triggers resistance towards the use of pig-based products, including vaccines and medications during crises (Bokek-Cohen et al. 2023). Therefore, public

education and clear *fatwa* (religious edicts) are crucial to bridge the gap between the demands of *sharia* and advances in medical technology. This can be strengthened through the application of technologies such as spectroscopy and DNA detection to scientifically ensure the *halal* status of products (Rohman & Windarsih 2020; Muflihah et al. 2023), as well as improving the quality of *informed consent* processes in healthcare services to guarantee the rights and religious sensitivities of Muslim patients.

In a cultural context, the use of pigs as marriage dowry sparks debate, as the dowry (*mahar*) is viewed as a spiritual symbol of the sacredness of the marriage contract (*akad*). While Islam does provide dispensation in emergency situations, this does not apply to sacred symbols like the dowry (Price 2020; Zailani et al. 2023). Socially, Muslim communities generally avoid interaction with pigs, both personally and in economic activities (Hunter et al. 2022), making their use as dowry controversial from the perspective of Islamic law and social values. Although not a pillar or essential condition for a valid marriage (*nikah*), the dowry retains important value as a symbol of male commitment. The practice of dowry is also heavily influenced by local culture. In Bugis society, for example, the giving of money as a sign of respect to the bride-to-be's family is known as "*dui menre*" (Avita et al., 2022).

In the case of Dani Muslims in Papua, the practice of giving pigs as dowry (*belis*) represents a form of accommodation towards strong customary traditions. Pigs, as valuable commodities, are used to fulfill the tradition of the groom's side giving to the bride's side. In Kokoda society, the dowry of plates symbolizes stability and readiness for marriage (Jubba et al. 2024). This practice can be understood from two perspectives: first, the dowry is not a pillar or essential condition for marriage, therefore it can be adapted to local culture; second, the giving of a pig dowry represents a balance between religiosity and cultural heritage. This accommodation reflects the efforts of a minority Muslim community to maintain their Islamic identity while preserving the harmony of the dominant culture (Ismail & Asso 2024). Nevertheless, approaches such as *tadarruj* (gradualism in da'wah) and the theory of '*urf*' (local custom) must be limited by *sharia*, as local customs cannot justify something that is explicitly forbidden (Sodiqin 2012).

Pigs: Sacred Animal and Forbidden Animal

Pigs among Dani Muslims are not simply animals living in their surrounding environment, pigs complement their life dynamics, even considered the origin of humankind, particularly the Dani tribe. This animal is regarded to this day as an exceptional and irreplaceable animal. Pigs are often used as a sacrificial animal in religious rituals such as in marriages and deaths. Under such conditions, it is apparent that pigs hold a key role in human life since they are part of the tribe's rituals. AL, a Dani figure who embraced Islam in its early introductory stage shared his story about human creation, which is closely associated with the pig. He stated as follows:

"Humans were created along with cigarettes, fire, and pigs. After the creation process, humans needed food. Humans planted tubers, bananas, and sugarcane. In the process of nurturing the crops, humans continued to watch over them, but it turned out the crops did not thrive. God instructed them to sacrifice pigs that were created along with humans. The ritual began by shooting an arrow through the pig's heart (author: Dani tribe's way of slaughter). Once slaughtered, the pig was cooked (using cooking stones/earth ovens). Once cooked, the pig's fat was smeared on to agricultural tools and heirloom objects. Humans would then consume the meat. In the sacrificial procession, humans were prohibited from doing any activities. Humans only stayed in their Honai (house). Once the sacrificial ritual was done, the next day shoots of planted crops began to sprout. That is why, it can be concluded that without pigs, humans could have gone extinct" (Interview in Walesi, 2022).

Regarding the crucial status pigs hold in the Dani community, YA, one of Dani's Muslim figures also stated the following:

"Pigs are one of the most valuable animas in the Dani tribe. Dani Muslims also consider pigs so. Pigs are used for marriage dowries, customary celebrations, and to pay for fines (head of people killed). Pigs are not just a symbol, they are also the ultimate wealth for all necessities" (Interview in Walesi, 2024).

Today, Dani Muslims very rarely consume pork. Use of pigs is only limited to customary celebration needs. In every customary celebration, pork is still prepared for consumption by invited guests, particularly non-Muslim ones. General knowledge of pigs has started to change and Islamic teachings prohibiting the consumption of *haram* animal meat has been accommodated. This is asserted by YA as follows:

"Dani Muslims, in particular, very rarely eat pork. Meanwhile, pork in customary celebrations is still prepared for coming guests. Pork is already understood as prohibited meat according to Islam making it no longer consumed. Today, Dani Muslims are accustomed to eating the chickens they raise themselves" (Interview in Walesi, 2024).

Aside from being used as offerings in customary ceremonies, pigs are utilized to demonstrate the strong relationship between humans and this animal (Delfi 2013). To show this close relationship, the skulls of pigs slaughtered as either offerings in ceremonies or skulls harvested after hunting are displayed on the ceiling and walls of their home.

The description above suggests that pigs maintain a deep-rooted status among Dani Muslim community. Pigs are the most favored animal by the Almighty and considered the most revered animal among other existing animals. In addition to having a high status, pigs are also considered the most precious of belongings or wealth, an intermediary media with irreplaceable functions (Irwandi et.al 2022). The use of pigs is not limited to customary rituals, as observed in religious processions such as weddings, which is an effort to maintain '*urf* (custom). This animal is used as dowry, which is a gift the man's family gives to the woman he is about to marry. For Dani Muslims, a pig dowry not only reflects the fulfillment of presenting a dowry to the woman's family, but it is also an effort to maintain the existence of an animal that has secured the Dani tribe's survival, despite Islam legally prohibiting its use. There are two dialectical interests in this event, i.e., the intersection between '*urf* and *maqashid syariah* (aims of shariah) resulting in a very thin line separating between halal and haram.

Pigs: Livestock and Cultural Identity

Pigs as animals have the same potential as other animals to be developed as commodities. This animal can easily be raised and bred since the feed it requires can easily be found around the settlements of Dani Muslims. The location of the pig pen is also found to be within the home and close to the kitchen, which means food remains can be removed directly to the pen. In the morning, the pigs are free to roam the fields and find food on their own then return without having to be herded back into their pen late afternoon. When a pig becomes worth selling, people would sell them for various reasons. The pigs they sell are animals that are not used for ceremonial interest or customary ceremonies. YA, a Dani Muslim figure, stated the following regarding pigs that are still raised by Dani Muslims.

"Dani Muslims raise pigs only for customary celebrations and other interests. Pigs are raised to sell and to pay for children's school fees. University costs are also covered through proceeds of pig sales" (Interview in Walesi, 2024).

The most frequently highlighted reason given by Dani Muslims as to why they still raise pigs is the economic value that pigs have. Pigs are animals that can be raised easily and have high

economic value. In this case, pigs are raised and bred for various purposes (Kasman 2015). One of the purposes for raising pigs, aside for consumption, is that meat can be sold to satisfy household needs. This is also found among Mentawai community, where pigs are raised properly and owned by each household. They raise pigs to fulfill their consumption needs when there are rituals or customary events like weddings. Pork is even considered their favorite kind of meat and it is always readily available. Pigs are also the beloved animal of the Mentawai community (Schefold 1991).

In the life of Dani Muslims, despite pig being considered legally haram, its existence holds a function that support the community's sustainability. Pigs serve as a symbol of fraternity and kinship. This animal is used as mediator and guarantor of relational continuity among their people. Ade Irwandi et al (2022) elaborates,

"Pigs as a forum and also as an intermediary medium to achieve cultural goals so that the lives of the Rereiket people run and go towards balance. Through pigs too, when pigs have exceeded their function as containers and intermediaries..."

YA, a Dani Muslim youth, also provided a statement about pigs. He said:

"...our (Muslim) community is very custom-bound. Although they are Muslims, their habit of raising pigs still continues. My own in-laws still raise pigs. Pigs are used when we engage in stone baking tradition, *walimah*, weddings, or funerals. Slaughtering pigs is one of the special agenda in those occasions" (Interview in Walesi, 2023).

Amidst the guest welcoming ceremony in Walesi, YA admitted that there are changes observed among Dani Muslims. He stated:

"Today there are many changes among Dani Muslims. They have become more aware about Islam. There are some Dani children who have continued on to pursue higher education. However, the presence of pigs being raised at home remains prominent" (Interview in Walesi, 2023).

In every household we are bound to find pig pens that house the animals. These pens are an inseparable part of their residence. The pig pen is even situated close to the kitchen and dining area. This is meant to make it easier for people to give their remaining food to their pigs. Every night, when the pigs are in the pen, we can hear the sound of pigs accompanying the night in the homes of the Dani people.

The descriptions above explain the close relationship fostered between human and animal. Such close relationship significantly correlates with the cosmology or belief, history, and interests of a community (Harris 1974). Cows for the Hindu community in India, for example, are considered sacred, hence they are afforded very "special" treatment. This is also the case with pigs for the people of Mentawai (Delfi 2012) and Dani (Yamin 2019), as pigs are considered an extremely significant animal making it impossible to discard on account of the several functions it holds. Animals, like pig in this context, have strategic functions to maximize human uniqueness, which also indicates several vested interests in the animal (Irwandi et.al 2022) such as to breed as livestock and for sale or trade in order to meet dietary needs, or even for export to various countries (Giarda et.al 2020).

Pigs as a Medium for Social Diplomacy and Cohesion

The presence of pigs for the Dani Muslim community, aside from strengthening the cultural bonds among the tribes, is also to serve as a medium of diplomacy among the tribes of Papua. The diversity of clans in a single tribe like Dani makes for potential dissenting opinions and even conflicts. Intertribal wars still often occur and require custom-based resolution mechanism. The pig is an animal often used as a solution for resolving on-going social conflicts. Conflicts that

occurred as a result of killing, adultery, and various other acts, and are considered to have violated customary law need to be compensated. The compensation medium since the very past has been resolved by means of customary fine paid for in the form of a number of pigs given to the victim. This also bolsters the pig's standing as a livestock animal among the tribes of Papua on account of the various applicable customary functions it holds. This also has an impact on the high value that pigs maintain, both economically and socially, as they are used for customary purposes that are still heavily practiced in communities (Iyai et al. 2011).

Among the Dani tribe, intertribal wars still frequently occur. The causes of these intertribal wars are usually customary violations such as taking away someone's daughter without her parents' or family's knowledge, adultery, and theft in the tribe, as well as other customary violations. For perpetrators taking away a girl without her parents' or family's knowledge, the fine is to pay with as many as 5 pigs to the girl's family. The case of adultery is similar, the person cheating on another man's wife is required to bring 5 pigs and in cases where the matter cannot be resolved through the payment of a fine, then divorce is required. When a war ends, pigs are slaughtered to indicate the end of the intertribal war. Currently, the price of pig, which is often used as a means of payment for customary fine, is approximately between 15,000,000 and 30,000,000 rupiahs. In cases where a girl is taken away without her parents' consent and adultery, the perpetrator is required to pay a fine of around 75,000,000-150,000,000 rupiahs. The number of pigs required to pay for the customary fine is entirely discussed and decided by the tribe chief after deliberating with the customary elders.

In addition to the function as a means for paying customary fines, ownership of pigs also indicates prestige for the people of the tribe, although many among them have embraced Islam. AM stated:

"To the Dani tribe, a person that owns a large livestock of pigs would be considered a person with high social status and is very well respected in the community. Owning a lot of pigs means that person will contribute in all social activities. Even more so in cases where that person is a tribal chief, he will be considered a wise person on account of his willingness to contribute something to the community. This is a cultural aspect that has long been maintained (Interview in Walesi, 2022).

AM further asserted:

There is a tribal chief (Author: Haji Aipon) who continues to raise pigs because he knew the community needs them. He also has to donate pigs to his Christian relatives. But he no longer eats pork. He thought that if we were to suddenly take away or cancel pigs from the life of the Dani people, it would be like removing one's own power because the respect of the community would drop" (Interview in Walesi, 2022).

One of the measures of a person's social status is observed from the number of pig skulls found in their home. The more pig skulls displayed, the higher the social status that person maintains (Irwandi et al 2022). The pig skulls displayed indicate the number of pigs slaughtered, commonly, for customary celebration purposes such as weddings and others.

The descriptions above show that pigs have highly strategic function and role among the Dani Muslim community. This haram animal is even considered the source of life making it a complementing aspect of Dani Muslim community's life dynamics. Pigs are considered a sacred animal and their functions and presence are continuously maintained. The use of pigs is not only limited to fulfilling the material needs of the community that have economic values, but it is more of a fulfilment of the community's spirituality. The use of pigs as a means for exchanging food stuffs and paying fines is a testament to special status pigs have. The Dani Muslim community also considers pigs as a cultural identity irreplaceable by other animals. Pigs also function as a bonding agent among the tribes and are used to pay for customary fines (Irwandi et al. 2022), which indicate the significance this animal has in the community. The way Dani Muslim community

treats pigs demonstrates that efforts are made to compromise between customary and Islamic interests, and that a strong bond is fostered between Dani Muslims and this particular animal.

The use of pigs in Muslim weddings, aside from openly giving space to compromise between religion and culture, is also seen as a way to maintain Dani Muslims' identity and their cultural roots. The use of pigs as dowry is even able to compromise two opposing interests in a single religious practice. On the one hand, giving pigs as dowry has integrative and cohesive functions that can strengthen cultural bonds and relations between social groups despite their differing religious beliefs. On the other hand, pigs serve as a media for dialogue between religious doctrine and empirical reality and social experience in a single religious activity. Religious doctrine is even translated as something that is not exclusive, but open for use as a guide to action in the efforts of satisfying public needs, although the media we are referring to here triggers debates. The use of pigs is not only about the use of animals, it also asserts that various issues can be resolved by using this animal. Preserving the pigs has turned out to be the key to the success of this group's survival to date.

This article highlights that religion—particularly Islam within Indonesia's pluralistic framework—is not a rigid, isolated ideology but one that evolves through contextual accommodations shaped by everyday realities. The case of pig usage in marriage practices among Dani Muslims illustrates how religious expressions can be fluid and responsive to social and ideological needs. It demonstrates that Islamic practices, while grounded in divine revelation, are subject to empirical negotiation and adaptation. The Dani Muslim community exemplifies how Islamic principles can be interpreted in ways that resonate with local customs, making the religion more accessible and meaningful to its followers. The findings raise important ethical considerations regarding the intersection of religious orthodoxy and cultural diversity. *First*, they challenge rigid interpretations of Islamic law that may overlook the lived experiences of minority Muslim communities. *Second*, they underscore the ethical responsibility of religious authorities to engage with local realities rather than impose universal norms that may not be contextually appropriate. *Third*, the study calls for a more inclusive understanding of Islamic practice—one that respects both theological integrity and cultural specificity—thereby reducing the risk of marginalization or stigmatization of minority expressions of faith.

This current article demonstrates that Islam within Indonesia's pluralistic framework is not a rigid and isolated religion. It develops through contextual accommodation shaped by everyday life realities. The case of pig usage in the marriage practice among Dani Muslims indicates how Islam is expressed flexibly and responsively to the social and ideological needs. This case demonstrates that the practice of Islam is an open, negotiable, and adaptable religion, as empirically observed. The Dani Muslim society exemplifies how the principles of Islam are interpreted and practiced in line with local cultural values, illustrating accessible and meaningful religiosity to its adherents. These empirical findings unlock the urgency of ethical consideration at the intersection of Islamic orthodoxy and cultural diversity. Initially, the rigid Islamic law interpretation may ignore the lived experiences of minority Muslim societies, e.g., the Dani Muslim community. Subsequently, the necessity for Islamic authorities to take on ethical responsibility and engage with local realities, rather than imposing universal norms that are likely contextually irrelevant. Eventually, the essence of an inclusive and comprehensive mindset of Islamic practices, including theological integrity and cultural uniqueness, helps mitigate the risks of marginalization and stigmatization of minority faith expressions.

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