

## Synchronization of Customary Values and Islamic Sharia in the Determination of Dowry and Wedding Party Costs in Bahari Village, South Buton Regency

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### Abstract

This study aims to analyze the practice of dowry determination based on social stratification and examine the synchronization between customary values and Islamic sharia principles in marriages within Bahari Village, South Buton Regency. A qualitative approach with a single case study design was employed. Data were collected through participatory observation, in-depth interviews with traditional leaders, religious leaders, and married couples, as well as documentation study. Data analysis followed the interactive model of Miles et al., encompassing data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing, with validity ensured through source and technique triangulation. The study yields two primary findings. First, dowry determination in Bahari Village is directly shaped by social stratification distinguishing the kaomu (nobility) and walaka (commoners), whereby the dowry amount functions not only as a religious obligation but also as a symbol of family honor and social standing. The customary unit of value known as boka proves adaptive, as its monetary worth is periodically adjusted to reflect economic changes without compromising the essence of tradition. Second, synchronization between customary law and sharia operates organically through the application of the 'urf concept, the taysir principle, and deliberative mechanisms in determining wedding costs. This harmony is sustained by the synergistic collaboration between traditional and religious leaders as two mutually legitimizing pillars of local authority. The study concludes that custom and Islamic sharia in Bahari Village are not in opposition, but function complementarily in shaping marriage practices that are just, adaptive, and harmonious.

### Keywords

Dowry; Social Stratification; Synchronization of Custom and Islamic Law

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## 1. INTRODUCTON

Bahari Village, located in South Buton Regency, is one of the Muslim communities that to this day continues to uphold its marriage traditions across generations, with a fairly high degree of harmony between customary norms and Islamic teachings. Marriage practices in this village are carried out with the simultaneous involvement of two important elements, namely traditional leaders who play a role in preserving and applying local cultural norms, and religious leaders who provide understanding of



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the provisions of Islamic sharia. The presence of these two authorities in every marriage process enables the community of Bahari Village to manage the differences between customary demands and Islamic values adaptively and without significant conflict.

The social stratification system still in effect in Bahari Village divides the community into two main groups, namely the kaomu group, which constitutes the nobility, and the walaka group, which constitutes ordinary community members. This distinction directly influences the amount of dowry set in marriage. The kaomu group sets a higher dowry compared to the walaka group, yet this difference does not give rise to serious social inequality because it has become part of a shared understanding within the community. In addition, dowry determination is also influenced by particular circumstances such as the occupation of the parents, intermarriage between groups, marriage between different villages, and premarital pregnancy, so that the mechanism of dowry determination in Bahari Village operates dynamically while remaining structured.

Another interesting aspect is the flexibility in managing wedding party costs. Unlike dowry determination, which is subject to specific customary provisions, wedding party costs in Bahari Village are adjusted to the economic capacity of each family, without any strictly binding customary rule. In fact, in some cases, wedding costs may be borne jointly by both families as a form of deliberation to ease the economic burden. This mechanism shows that the community of Bahari Village has succeeded in creating a synchronization that operates organically and optimally between customary values and the principle of public benefit (*maslahah*) in Islam, making marriage practice in this village relatively harmonious and largely free of conflict.

Normatively and theoretically, the condition of optimal and harmonious synchronization occurring in Bahari Village is in fact something not easily achieved within the context of a plural society with social stratification. According to Hanafi Sharul (2026), marriage as a social institution often becomes an arena of tension between religious and cultural interests, such that harmonization between the two cannot be realized without a long and complex process of negotiation. Furthermore, Burhanuddin (2025) affirms that the principle of ease (*taysir*) in dowry determination is indeed a foundation of Islamic sharia, yet its implementation in the field is often hindered by social pressure and cultural expectations embedded within society. Meanwhile, Riadi (2024) cautions that custom can only function as a social mechanism compatible with sharia when there is strong collective awareness within the community, a condition that in reality is rarely fulfilled comprehensively. Within the context of Indonesia's local cultural diversity, Rakhmat et al. (2025) show that marriage practices in many communities are still colored by unresolved systemic tension between customary norms and religious law. Further, Sawdah (2025) states that the relationship between religious norms and cultural norms in marriage practice is one of the most complex issues in contemporary family law studies, one that often

produces incongruity at the level of practice even though the two are conceptually considered capable of running in parallel.

There is a significant gap between the ideal conditions depicted by various theories and academic studies and the reality found in Bahari Village, South Buton Regency. Scholars consistently affirm that synchronization between customary values and Islamic sharia in marriage practice is a process prone to conflict, difficult to achieve, and requiring a lengthy mechanism of negotiation. In fact, however, the community of Bahari Village presents a different reality altogether, in which such synchronization has operated organically, adaptively, and with relatively little conflict, even within the context of a still-strong social stratification distinguishing the kaomu and walaka groups. This gap forms the point of departure for this study, namely how a community that, theoretically, exists in conditions prone to tension has instead managed to create functional harmony between two distinct value systems.

From this gap arise fundamental research questions. First, how is the mechanism of dowry determination actually practiced in the daily life of the Bahari Village community, and what factors determine the amount of dowry under various social conditions? Second, how is the synchronization between customary values and Islamic sharia principles truly realized in the practice of determining dowry and wedding party costs amid the still-prevailing differences in social stratification? These two questions form the core of this study, since their answers are not only locally relevant to the Buton community but can also make a broader academic contribution to understanding the dynamics of Islamic family law in communities with strong customary traditions in Indonesia.

Prior studies intersecting with this research can be mapped into several thematic clusters. A number of studies have examined the relationship between custom and Islamic law in the context of marriage in general. For instance, studies on dowry practice in various Muslim communities in Indonesia show that the amount and form of dowry are strongly influenced by local socio-cultural construction (Ridwan, 2020; Syahbibi Ridho, 2026). In addition, several studies have specifically raised the issue of social stratification in customary marriage practice, but these are generally limited to describing the phenomenon without in-depth analysis of the mechanism of synchronization (Hanafi Sharul, 2026; Sawdah, 2025; Rakhmat et al., 2025). There are also studies discussing the principle of taysir and ease in dowry determination from the perspective of contemporary fiqh, but such studies tend to be normative in nature and give little empirical attention to field realities (Burhanuddin, 2025; Riadi, 2024). A similar pattern is found in studies on the role of traditional and religious leaders in marriage practice, most of which have been conducted in Javanese, Minangkabau, and Bugis communities, while studies on the Buton community remain very limited (Hanafi Sharul, 2026; Burhanuddin, 2025; Riadi, 2024).

From this mapping, it is evident that previous studies have not comprehensively examined the phenomenon of synchronization between customary values and Islamic sharia within the context of the Buton community, particularly Bahari Village with its unique kaomu-walaka stratification system. Studies that simultaneously analyze the mechanism of dowry determination, the management of wedding party costs, social stratification, and the dynamics of custom-sharia synchronization within a single specific community are almost nonexistent in the existing literature (Sawdah, 2025; Rakhmat et al., 2025; Syahbibidi Ridho, 2026; Ridwan, 2020; Riadi, 2024). Moreover, most previous studies are deductive in nature, using theory as an analytical lens without deeply exploring the community's internal logic in managing these value differences (Burhanuddin, 2025; Hanafi Sharul, 2026; Sawdah, 2025; Rakhmat et al., 2025; Syahbibidi Ridho, 2026). This gap creates the space for the present study, namely to fill the void of empirical research that directly elaborates the process of synchronization between custom and Islamic sharia in the marital life of the South Buton community, so that this study is not repetitive but constitutes an original contribution enriching the discourse on Islamic family law in Indonesia.

The novelty of this research lies in three aspects at once. First, this study is the first empirical study to specifically elaborate the mechanism of synchronization between customary values and Islamic sharia in the practice of determining dowry and wedding party costs within the community of Bahari Village, which has a distinctive kaomu-walaka social stratification system. Second, this study does not merely describe the phenomenon but analyzes the community's internal socio-cultural logic that enables this harmony to be realized organically without a top-down formal approach. Third, this study broadens the scope of Islamic family law studies in Indonesia by incorporating the perspective of the Buton community, which has thus far received inadequate attention in academic literature, while also making a tangible contribution to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 5 on gender equality and SDG 16 on peace, justice, and strong institutions, through a deeper understanding of just and harmonious marriage practices at the community level.

The urgency of this research can be seen from two dimensions at once, namely the academic dimension and the social-policy dimension. Academically, the development of Islamic family law studies grounded in the empirical reality of local communities is greatly needed to avoid the trap of generalization that reduces the complexity of marriage practice among Indonesian Muslim communities. Socially, an in-depth understanding of how a community such as Bahari Village has succeeded in managing value differences harmoniously can serve as a reference model for other communities currently facing tension between custom and religion in marriage practice. Beyond that, the findings of this study have the potential to provide input for policymakers in the field of family law, particularly in efforts to strengthen SDG 10 on reducing social inequality and SDG 1 on poverty

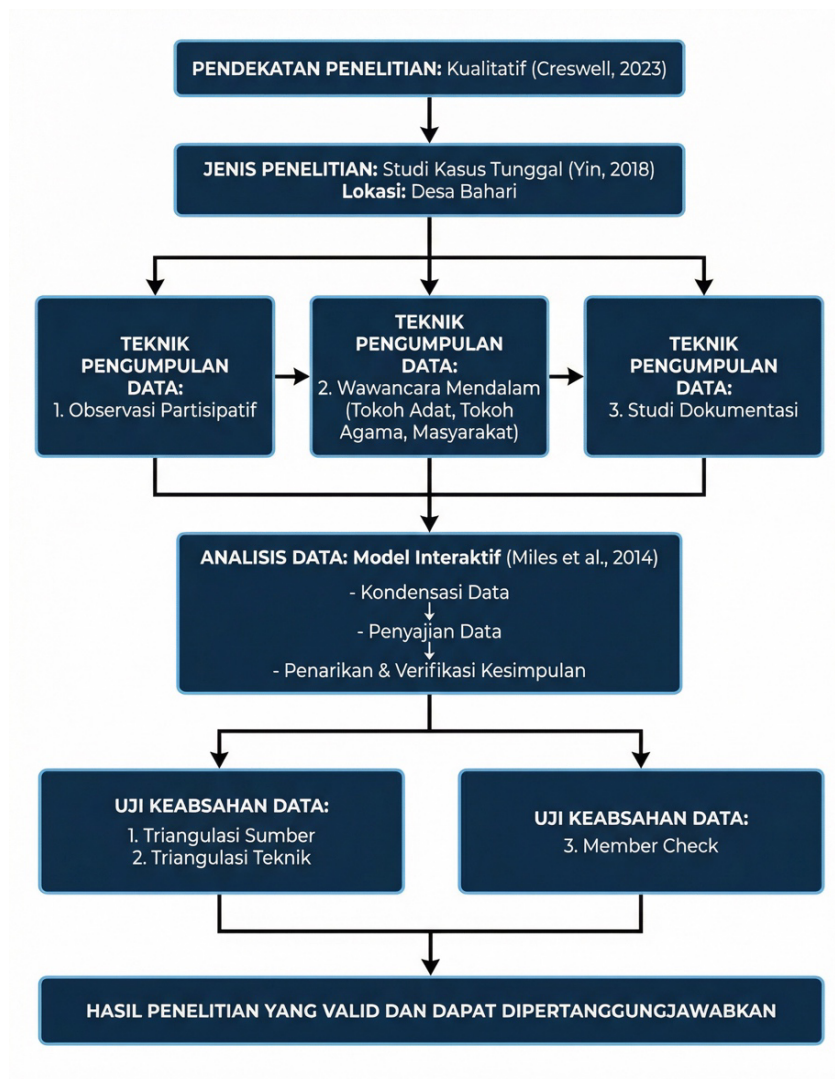
eradication, given that disproportionate dowry and wedding costs often become an economic burden that worsens the condition of newly formed families, making this study a relevant contribution with a direct impact on society.

Based on the background described above, this study focuses on two interrelated and central issues. The first issue concerns how the practice of dowry determination in marriages within the community of Bahari Village, South Buton Regency, is carried out in daily life, including how the difference in social stratification between the kaomu and walaka groups influences the amount of dowry and wedding party costs. The second issue concerns how the synchronization between customary values and Islamic sharia principles is truly realized in the practice of determining dowry and managing wedding party costs in Bahari Village, and what social mechanisms allow this harmony to function amid the existing value differences. These two research questions are constructed complementarily, so that the resulting research framework does not overlap but instead complements itself in comprehensively revealing the phenomenon of synchronization between custom and Islamic sharia.

## **2. METHOD**

This study employs a qualitative approach as developed by Creswell (2023), namely an approach aimed at understanding the meaning and complexity of social phenomena from the participants' perspective within their natural context. This approach was chosen because this study seeks to explore in depth how the community of Bahari Village interprets, negotiates, and carries out the practice of dowry determination and wedding party costs in their daily life. The type of research used is a single case study as conceptualized by Yin (2018), in which Bahari Village is treated as a single case with its own distinctiveness, namely the occurrence of harmonious synchronization between the kaomu-walaka customary values and Islamic sharia principles in marriage practice. The data collection techniques applied consist of three methods, namely participatory observation to directly observe the course of the marriage process and social interaction among the parties involved, in-depth interviews with key informants consisting of traditional leaders, religious leaders, and community members from both groups, and documentation study of customary records, marriage documents, and relevant archives

available in the village.



**Figure 1.** Research Method Framework

Data analysis in this study was carried out using the interactive model developed by Miles et al. (2014), which comprises three activity flows occurring simultaneously, namely data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. Data condensation was carried out by sorting, focusing, and simplifying the field data obtained from interviews, observation, and documentation so that only data relevant to the research focus were analyzed further. Data display was carried out in the form of narrative descriptions systematically depicting the mechanism of dowry determination and custom-sharia synchronization, while conclusion drawing was carried out gradually by continually referring back to the field data to ensure its validity. The validity of the data was tested through source triangulation, namely by comparing and confirming data obtained from traditional leaders, religious leaders, and community members, as well as technique triangulation by cross-comparing the results of interviews, observation, and documentation. In addition, a member check was carried out with key

informants to ensure that the researcher's interpretation matched the actual intentions and experiences felt by the informants, so that the results of this study can be scientifically accounted for.

### 3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

#### 3.1 Dowry Determination Practice and the Influence of Social Stratification between the Kaomu and Walaka Groups in Community Marriage

The community of Bahari Village lives within a framework of social stratification that has been deeply rooted across generations. There are two main groups recognized by custom, namely the kaomu group, which constitutes the nobility bearing the titles Ode and Waode, and the walaka group, which constitutes the general community. This distinction is not merely an identity marker, but directly determines the dowry standard applicable in every marriage, as part of a collective understanding inherited across generations.

Within the kaomu group, the amount of dowry is set using the boka unit, a distinctive unit of value in Buton custom. The applicable standard for marriages between nobility has two levels: if the parents of the bride or groom hold a particular position within the social structure of the community, the dowry amount set is higher than if the parents hold no such position. This difference reflects that dowry within the context of the kaomu group is not merely a dimension of normative obligation, but also carries symbolic meaning as a representation of family honor and dignity before the community.



**Figure 2.** Dowry Determination Practice and the Influence of Social Stratification between the Kaomu and Walaka Groups

Meanwhile, the walaka group has simpler dowry provisions, yet ones that are still consistently recognized and accepted by all strata of society. The dowry standard for this group is lower than that of the kaomu group, but this difference does not give rise to significant social tension. This occurs because the entire community has internalized this difference as a reflection of the respective social responsibilities of each group, rather than as a form of injustice or discrimination.

A dynamic aspect of Bahari Village custom is evident in the adjustment of the boka unit's value in line with changes in the community's economic conditions. The value of boka is not left frozen at an old, no-longer-relevant benchmark, but is adjusted so that the dowry obligation can still be fulfilled without placing excessive burden on the community. This proves that custom in Bahari Village is not a rigid system, but a living value system capable of wisely responding to the changing times.

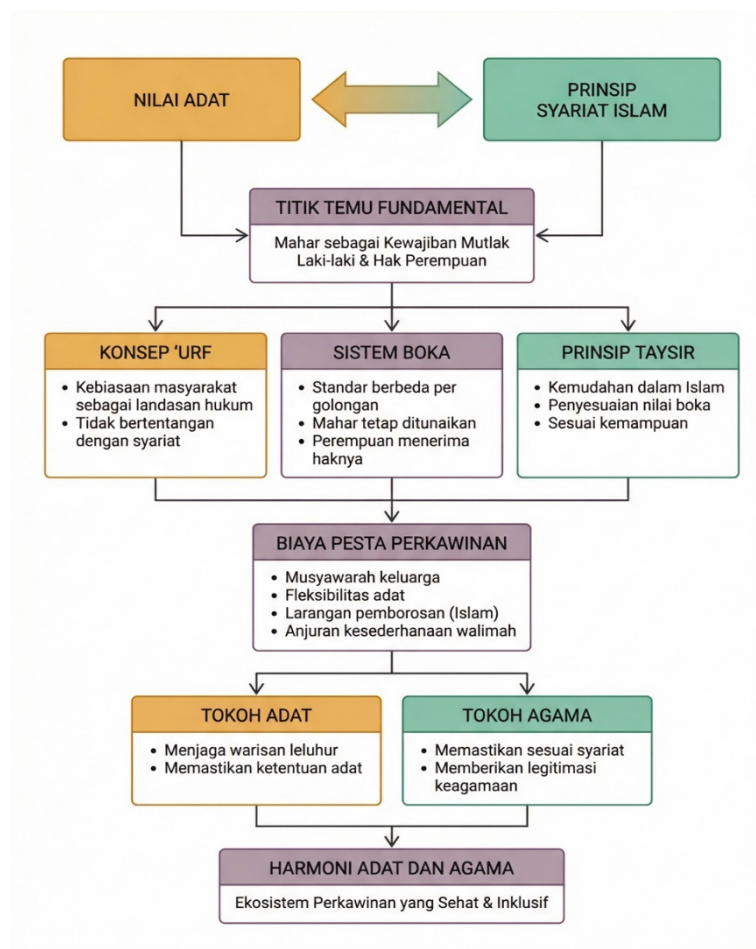
This study also found provisions applicable to marriages between different villages, in which the community of Bahari Village holds the principle that the tradition of the bride's side serves as the point of reference. If the woman is from Bahari Village, the local customary dowry standard remains applied even though the man is from another region. This principle reflects the community's confidence in maintaining its cultural identity while also demonstrating profound respect for the existence of local values in interactions with outside communities. As for wedding party costs, these are not governed by any binding customary provision, but are left entirely to the deliberation of both families according to their capacity and mutual agreement.

### ***3.2. Forms of Synchronization between Customary Values and Islamic Sharia Principles in the Practice of Dowry Determination and Wedding Party Costs in the Community***

Field findings consistently show that custom and Islamic sharia in Bahari Village are not positioned in opposition to one another, but instead run alongside each other organically as two mutually complementary value systems. The most fundamental point of convergence between the two lies in the shared agreement that dowry is an absolute obligation that must be fulfilled by the man as the woman's right prior to the marriage contract. Custom reinforces this principle through a mandatory procession, while sharia provides the normative basis affirming the validity and necessity of fulfilling this dowry.

From the perspective of Islamic law, the practice of dowry determination based on group can be understood through the concept of 'urf, namely a community custom that can serve as a legal basis as long as it does not conflict with the principles of sharia. The use of the boka unit with differing standards between the kaomu and walaka groups contains no element in conflict with sharia, since the dowry still exists and is still paid, the woman still receives her right, and the man still fulfills his obligation. What

differs is merely the mechanism and the measure, and this is precisely the space that Islam grants to the community to regulate its procedures according to the local context.



**Figure 3.** Forms of Synchronization between Customary Values and Islamic Sharia Principles

This synchronization is also evident in how the community responds to changes in the value of boka. The value adjustments carried out are not a neglect of tradition, but rather an adaptive response consistent with the principle of taysir in Islam, namely the principle of ease intended to prevent religious obligations from becoming a burden exceeding a person's reasonable capacity. The community neither imposes an old, no-longer-relevant standard, nor abandons the boka system as part of its customary identity, so that both are preserved simultaneously.

In the management of wedding party costs, synchronization between custom and sharia is realized through the principle of deliberation, which forms the basis for decision-making. The flexibility of custom in determining the amount of party costs depends entirely on the capacity and agreement of the family, and this is consistent with the Islamic principle that prohibits extravagance and encourages simplicity in holding a walimah (wedding feast). This mechanism creates an inclusive space for people of all economic backgrounds to carry out marriage without excessive social pressure, while also

preventing the practice of going into debt for the sake of prestige, which has the potential to cause long-term harm.

The success of this synchronization is inseparable from the collaborative role of traditional leaders and religious leaders as the two main pillars in every marriage procession. Traditional leaders ensure that all ancestral provisions are properly carried out, while religious leaders are present not to oppose custom, but to ensure that every element of the procession does not exceed the boundaries of sharia. The collaboration between the two creates a healthy marriage ecosystem, in which every decision receives legitimacy from the two most respected authorities in the community, making Bahari Village a real reflection of the harmony between custom and religion in the life of local Muslim communities in Indonesia.

### ***3.3 Dowry Determination Practice and the Influence of Social Stratification between the Kaomu and Walaka Groups in Community Marriage***

The findings of this study show that dowry determination in Bahari Village does not occur in a space devoid of social structure, but is strongly determined by the stratification system that customarily distinguishes the kaomu and walaka groups. Dowry in this context is understood not merely as a religious obligation, but also as a symbol of honor, dignity, and the social identity of the family before the community. This finding is consistent with Ridwan's (2020) view that the position of dowry in marriage is multidimensional, functioning not only as a normative obligation under sharia, but also carrying a social function that reflects the family's position and dignity within the social structure.

Furthermore, Syahbibidi Ridho (2026) affirms that dowry and dignity are two inseparable entities in Islamic marriage practice in Indonesia, since the amount of dowry often serves as a symbolic representation of the value and honor collectively recognized by the community. An interesting finding of this study is that the stratification system distinguishing dowry standards between the two groups does not give rise to social tension, but is instead accepted as a fair and meaningful order by all strata of society. This differs from the general assumption found in Hanafi Sharul's (2026) study, which states that differences in social status within the institution of marriage often become a source of conflict between religious and cultural interests.

### ***3.4 Forms of Synchronization between Customary Values and Islamic Sharia Principles in the Practice of Dowry Determination and Wedding Party Costs in the Community***

The findings of this study clearly show that the synchronization between customary values and Islamic sharia in Bahari Village is neither artificial nor forced, but takes place organically through the community's internal social logic built over generations. The use of the boka unit in dowry determination, which differs between the kaomu and walaka groups, can be understood through the concept of 'urf in Islamic law, namely a community custom that can serve as a legal basis as long as it

does not conflict with the principles of sharia. Rakhmat et al. (2025) show that marriage practice in many Indonesian Muslim communities is still colored by unresolved systemic tension between customary norms and religious law.

Meanwhile, Sawdah (2025) states that the relationship between religious norms and cultural norms in marriage practice is one of the most complex issues in contemporary family law studies, one that often produces incongruity at the level of practice. The findings in Bahari Village instead reveal a fundamentally different reality, in which the concept of 'urf not only functions as a conceptual bridge between custom and sharia, but truly lives and works functionally in everyday marriage practice without requiring complicated negotiation. Thus, this study not only reinforces the relevance of the concept of 'urf in Islamic law, but also provides empirical evidence that this concept can operate quietly yet effectively at the community level where customary awareness remains strong.

#### **4. CONCLUSIONS**

This study finds that dowry determination in Bahari Village is directly influenced by the social stratification system distinguishing the kaomu and walaka groups, in which dowry functions not only as a sharia obligation but also as a symbol of family honor and social identity within the community. The difference in dowry standards between groups does not give rise to social tension, but is instead accepted as a meaningful order because it has been collectively internalized across generations. The boka system, as a customary unit of value, proves to be adaptive, as its value is adjusted in line with the community's economic development without sacrificing the substance of tradition, while wedding party costs are determined entirely through deliberation based on the economic capacity of each family. This condition directly contributes to the achievement of SDG 1 on poverty eradication and SDG 10 on reducing inequality, since a proportional, deliberation-based mechanism for determining dowry and wedding costs prevents newly formed families from becoming trapped in excessive economic burden.

The synchronization between customary values and Islamic sharia in Bahari Village takes place organically through the application of the 'urf concept, which makes local customary practice a legal basis compatible with Islamic principles. This harmony does not require lengthy and conflict-ridden negotiation, as it is sustained by the synergistic collaboration between traditional leaders and religious leaders as two mutually legitimizing pillars of authority in every marriage procession. This functionally operating model of synchronization makes Bahari Village a tangible example of a local Muslim community that has succeeded in harmoniously and adaptively integrating two distinct value systems. This achievement is directly relevant to SDG 5 on gender equality, since women's right to dowry is guaranteed by both custom and sharia, as well as SDG 16 on peace and strong institutions, since marriage practice in this village takes place within a fair, inclusive, and largely conflict-free system of

community governance.

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