

The Egg-Stepping Tradition in Javanese Marriage Customs from the Perspective of Islamic Law

Original Article

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Abstract

Marriage is one of the most important events in human life. One of the ceremonies that demonstrates the harmonious blend of Javanese traditional weddings is the egg-stepping tradition. This study examines the permissibility (*hukm*) of the egg-stepping tradition within Javanese marriage from the perspective of Islamic legal principles, assessing its alignment with the Compilation of Islamic Law (KHI) and broader *sharī'ah* objectives. This study employed a qualitative method with a normative juridical analysis. The normative juridical approach, a key technique in legal research that stresses the examination of legal norms, doctrines, and principles, is used in this study. From the perspective of the Compilation of Islamic Law (KHI), the egg-stepping practice can be regarded as acceptable, provided that marriage is carried out in accordance with Islamic principles and that local customs do not conflict with sharia. Therefore, the egg-stepping tradition is not a problem, as long as it does not violate Islamic law. On the other hand, the egg-stepping ritual forms part of the symbolic sequence in Javanese traditional weddings, carrying deep philosophical meaning and cultural significance. Such customs reinforce the normative view that marriage is designed to establish a family, as outlined in the Marriage Law (Law No. 1 of 1974, amended by Law No. 16 of 2019). Consequently, these traditions may influence judicial interpretations, embedding communal values into legal reasoning. Future research could use qualitative methods to explore contemporary Indonesian ulama's views on these traditions, addressing the community's need for contextualized fatwa guidance.

Keywords: Egg-Stepping, Islam, Javanese Customs, Perspective, Tradition.

1. Introduction

Marriage is one of the most important events in human life which not only functions as a union of two individuals, but also as a social, moral and spiritual bond between two families (Manuputty et al., 2024). In the context of Indonesian society, marriage has a very deep meaning because it involves religious, customary, and cultural values that are passed down from generation to generation. According to Law Number 1 of 1974 concerning Marriage, marriage is defined as a physical and spiritual bond between a man and a woman with the aim of forming a happy and eternal family based on the One Almighty God (Endang Prasetyawati, 2023). This definition emphasizes that marriage is not just a biological or social relationship, but also contains a spiritual responsibility to maintain harmony, welfare, and family sustainability.

In Indonesia's pluralistic and tradition-rich society, each region has its own distinct customs and wedding ceremonies. One tradition with rich symbolic significance and deep philosophical significance is the Javanese traditional wedding. In Javanese culture, marriage is understood not only as the union of two individuals but also as the union of two extended families, who are expected to live in harmony and harmony (Sakinah et al., 2025). The



traditional procession carried out is not merely ceremonial, but is full of the meaning of life, moral advice, and prayers that reflect the religious and philosophical outlook of Javanese society. Javanese traditional marriage is basically a reflection of the Javanese people's outlook on life which upholds balance between the physical and spiritual worlds (Azizi, 2018). In practice, Javanese traditional weddings include various symbols and rituals that reflect two important dimensions, the profane and the sacred. These two aspects complement each other and cannot be separated, as they together form the profound meaning behind each traditional ceremony. The philosophical values of Javanese traditional marriage refer to the social, cultural, and traditional dimensions passed down through generations (Handayani, 2024).

One of the ceremonies that demonstrates the harmonious blend of Javanese traditional weddings is the egg-stepping tradition. This tradition is usually performed during the *panggih* ceremony (the meeting between the groom and bride). During the ceremony, the groom steps on eggs prepared in front of the wedding dais, then the bride washes her husband's feet using prepared water (Fitra & Dollah, 2025). Symbolically, this act conveys a profound philosophy about roles, responsibilities, and loyalty in married life. The egg-stepping tradition reflects Javanese social and cultural values regarding gender roles, cooperation, and respect in married life. The stepping on an egg symbolizes the beginning of a new life, while the act of washing the feet symbolizes a wife's willingness to respect and support her husband as head of the family. This tradition also conveys a moral message about the importance of mutual respect and cooperation to create a harmonious and loving household (Mijianti et al., 2026).

The central problem this study addresses is the religious-legal (*shar'ī*) status of the egg-stepping tradition. While it is a culturally rich practice, its permissibility must be evaluated against the principles of Islamic law, particularly regarding rituals associated with the marriage contract (*'aqd al-nikāḥ*) and potential conflicts with the doctrine of *bid'ah* (reprehensible innovation) or gendered roles in marriage. While the law defines marriage in normative terms as a physical and spiritual bond aimed at forming a happy and eternal family, it does not explicitly regulate or recognize traditional rituals (Sidiqah, 2023). This creates a legal ambiguity whether such customs can be considered consistent with Islamic principles and statutory requirements, or whether they remain purely cultural expressions without binding legal force. The problem formulation therefore focuses on how Indonesian positive law interprets and accommodates traditional practices within the legal framework of marriage, and whether these practices align with or contradict the objectives of marriage as defined by law, as well as investigated by Katili et al. (2025) and Purwanti & Natalis (2025).

The urgency of this legal analysis lies in the need to bridge the gap between statutory provisions and socio-cultural practices that continue to shape marriage in Indonesia. Without clear legal interpretation, traditional rituals such as the egg-stepping ceremony risk being marginalized or misunderstood, despite their deep cultural and philosophical significance (Khan, 2014). At the same time, the absence of explicit regulation creates uncertainty in judicial practice, potentially leading to inconsistent decisions when such traditions intersect with legal disputes. A thorough legal analysis is therefore essential to ensure that positive law accommodates cultural diversity while remaining consistent with Islamic principles and constitutional values. This urgency reflects the importance of safeguarding both cultural identity and legal certainty in Indonesia's pluralistic society.

Based on the description above, this study examines the permissibility (*ḥukm*) of the egg-stepping tradition within Javanese marriage from the perspective of Islamic legal principles, assessing its alignment with the Compilation of Islamic Law (KHI) and broader *sharī'ah* objectives

2. Literature Review

2.1. The Tradition of Egg-Stepping in Javanese Traditional Weddings

The egg-stepping tradition is an important part of Javanese traditional wedding ceremonies, particularly during the *panggih* stage, the moment when the bride and groom meet after the marriage ceremony (Prastika, 2024). This ritual is not merely ceremonial, but is steeped in symbolic meaning and profound philosophy about responsibility, loyalty, and the balanced roles of husband and wife in building a household. This tradition involves placing a raw chicken egg on a winnowing basket lined with cloth or flowers. The groom steps on the egg until it breaks, then the bride washes her husband's feet with water from a jug. While seemingly simple, this ceremony holds profound moral and spiritual significance. Symbolically, the egg represents the source of life. When the egg breaks, it marks the beginning of a new chapter for the bride and groom as husband and wife. The groom's stepping on the egg signifies his readiness to assume responsibility as head of the family, protecting and providing for the family. Meanwhile, the bride's washing her husband's feet symbolizes sincerity, respect, and readiness to accompany him with love. This signification is not merely a form of devotion, but also a symbol of harmony, cooperation, and mutual respect between husband and wife (Burch, 2019; Imun et al., 2023).

From a spiritual perspective, the water used to wash the feet reflects purity and the hope that their household will always be clean, peaceful, and filled with blessings. The prayers and blessings of parents and elders further reinforce the sacred value of this procession, emphasizing that marriage is not only a social event but also a religious service that requires God's blessing. Overall, the egg-stepping tradition reflects a balanced blend of profane and sacred elements, reflecting the social and spiritual life of Javanese society (Suhardi et al., 2023). Through this ritual, people are encouraged to understand the meaning of marriage as a sacred bond filled with responsibility and mutual respect. Therefore, this tradition needs to be preserved and passed down so that the noble values of Javanese culture remain alive and serve as a guide for the younger generation in building harmonious and ethical households.

2.2. The Egg-Stepping Tradition and the Adat-Sharia Relationship in Indonesian Law

In Indonesia, *adat* or customary law plays a task in shaping social practices, including marriage traditions such as the egg-stepping ceremony in Javanese weddings. *Adat* reflects local wisdom, values, and cultural identity passed down through generations, as well as explained by Moeis et al. (2022) and Nggiku et al. (2024). Although not codified in the same way as statutory law, *adat* is recognized as one of the living sources of law in Indonesia, influencing how communities interpret and practice marriage beyond the formal provisions of Law No. 1 of 1974 (Azani, 2021). Islamic law (sharia), which emphasizes religious duties, spiritual harmony, and procreation, offers a normative framework for marriage in addition to *adat*. Sharia is incorporated into the Indonesian legal system through Islamic courts that manage Muslim marriage, divorce, and inheritance (Nashih, 2025). This results in a dual influence, sharia defines the moral and spiritual ideals of marriage, while statutory law establishes procedural obligations. As a result, customs like egg-stepping are frequently assessed according to how well they conform to Islamic values, especially whether they support the goals of marriage (*maqasid al-sharia*).

In Indonesia's legal system, *adat* and sharia have a complementary and occasionally tense partnership. *Adat* customs are frequently upheld as long as they do not conflict with Islamic principle (Lukito, 2019; Salim, 2015). For instance, the egg-stepping custom is seen metaphorically as a moral lesson about accountability and teamwork in marital life that is

consistent with Islamic principles. To ensure compliance with sharia, a ritual may be rejected or altered if it is thought to be at odds with Islamic doctrine. This interaction demonstrates how Indonesian law preserves religious legitimacy while allowing for cultural variety. However, customs like egg-stepping can coexist with official legal requirements because the law does not forbid the continuation of *adat* rites. This integration shows Indonesia's attempt to maintain marriage as both a legal institution and a socioreligious practice by striking a balance between cultural heritage and religious duties.

3. Methods

This study employed a qualitative method with a normative juridical analysis. The normative juridical approach, a key technique in legal research that stresses the examination of legal norms, doctrines, and principles, is used in this study. To comprehend the legal framework guiding politics and policy-making in Indonesia, it entails critically analyzing laws, rules, and court rulings. The research attempts to uncover the normative aspects of legal politics and their influence on policy making by examining legal texts and doctrines. The study of legal documents is combined with theoretical ideas from political science and law in a legislative and conceptual approach. Themes, patterns, and trends in pertinent legal sources and scholarly literature are found through qualitative analysis. Rules, policy papers and academic publications on law are examples of data collecting. This align with the explanation from (Budianto, 2022; Malik et al., 2024; Verdes, 2025).

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. The Values and Meaning of the Egg-Stepping Tradition

The egg-stepping tradition is part of a symbolic series of Javanese traditional wedding ceremonies, embodying profound philosophical meaning and cultural values. This ritual is generally performed after the *panggih* ceremony, the moment the bride and groom meet. During the ceremony, the groom is asked to step on an egg placed on a white cloth, and the bride then washes her husband's feet as a symbol of respect and devotion. In this context, the egg symbolizes the beginning of life and the potential for procreation. The act of stepping on an egg marks the transition of a man's status from single to husband and father-to-be. This represents the man's readiness to assume responsibility as head of the family, including aspects of reproduction, protection, and leadership within the household.

One meaning of the egg-stepping tradition is self-control and humility. The egg breaking when stepped on represents a person's readiness to face the dynamics of married life, including change, challenges, and sacrifice. The groom is expected to abandon childish behavior and demonstrate maturity in fulfilling his role as a husband. On the other hand, the bride's act of washing her husband's feet reflects the values of loyalty, sincerity, and respect. In Javanese culture, which prioritizes harmony and balance, this ritual does not merely indicate a subordinate position, but rather a manifestation of love and commitment to mutual support and service in married life. The white cloth used as footwear symbolizes purity and the hope for a peaceful and contentious household.

The egg-stepping tradition also reflects the values of mutual cooperation and social cohesion. This procession is usually witnessed by the extended family and the surrounding community, who pray for the long-lasting and happy marriage of the bride and groom. Thus, marriage is not merely a private affair between two individuals, but also part of a broader social structure. In a modern context, this tradition remains relevant as a reminder of the importance

of responsibility, equality, and commitment in building a family. While some symbolic elements may have undergone adjustments, the essence of egg-stepping remains a profound reflection on mental and spiritual readiness for marriage. The egg-stepping tradition in Javanese traditional weddings also holds profound aesthetic value. Beauty in Javanese culture is not only seen visually, but also encompasses elements of harmony, balance, and symbolic meaning contained in every movement, object, and symbol used in the procession. Visually, the egg-stepping ritual presents an elegant and meaningful arrangement. Free-range chicken eggs placed on a white cloth are the central element of this procession. The white cloth symbolizes purity and the ideal of a peaceful, conflict-free household. The eggs, as symbols of the beginning of life, are placed with great care, creating a solemn atmosphere that invites contemplation. When the groom steps on the egg with his right foot, the gesture is not merely a physical act, but a symbol of readiness and transition into his new role as husband and father-to-be.

The egg-stepping tradition serves to strengthen the ritual structure of traditional weddings. This is in line with Ma'arif and Mayasaroh (2025) who stated that the “egg-stepping” and “*kacar kucur*” processions play an important role in the structure of traditional weddings. The “egg-stepping” ritual symbolizes life lessons, where broken eggs and water droplets symbolize hopes and prayers for the happiness, fertility, and well-being of the bride and groom. This procession signifies that building a household is a journey full of challenges, beauty, and an abundance of blessings. In the Egg Stepping ritual, the groom first steps on a free-range chicken egg that has been placed on a white cloth. After the egg breaks, the bride washes her husband's feet with water from the garden flowers and dries them. This procession is full of meaning about devotion and readiness to embark on a new life with humility and responsibility. The egg-stepping tradition is a form of symbolic communication that represents the husband's role as the leader of the family, and the wife as a companion who is ready to provide service and wash her husband's feet as a symbol of loyalty and support in building a household. Not only that, the egg-stepping tradition also has philosophical values. Milanguni et al. (2025) stated that eggs are shelled objects that contain potential life, usually produced by birds such as chickens, ducks, and birds. In a biological context, eggs also refer to female reproductive cells that function as potential offspring when fertilized by sperm from a man. In the egg-stepping tradition, the groom's action of stepping on the egg symbolizes the breaking of the hymen, which symbolically marks the beginning of the husband-wife relationship. This meaning reflects that the bride's virginity is seen as a right given to her husband.

The beauty of the egg-stepping tradition is also reflected in the bride's use of garden flower water when washing her husband's feet. The flower water, which consists of various types of fragrant flowers such as jasmine, roses, and cananga, not only visually beautifies the procession but also provides a calming fragrance and symbolizes purity. The act of washing the husband's feet with flower water symbolizes devotion, loyalty, and sincerity, which in Javanese culture is considered a noble and graceful manifestation of love. The body movements in this procession also have their own aesthetic value, the firm steps of the groom are then accompanied by the gentle and respectful movements of the bride, creating a harmonious and meaningful rhythm (Aziz, 2017; Subagiya, 2023).

In Indonesia's pluralistic legal system, the cultural explanations of the egg-stepping tradition, which place a strong emphasis on qualities of accountability, humility, loyalty, and social harmony inevitably touch on legal ramifications. The ritual's meanings, such as procreation, gender roles, and marital obligations can affect how marriage is viewed under statutory law and Islamic principles, even if it is based in adat and functions as symbolic moral teaching. Cultural customs like egg-stepping support the normative assumption that marriage

is a relationship intended to create a family, as defined by the Marriage Law (Law No. 1 of 1974, updated by Law No. 16 of 2019). As a result, judicial viewpoints may be shaped by these traditions, which could legitimize communal values in legal reasoning.

In relation to the Compilation of Islamic Law (KHI), the egg-stepping tradition can be understood within the framework that marriage must be conducted according to Islamic teachings while still accommodating local customs that do not contradict sharia. The KHI emphasizes that the purpose of marriage is to form a harmonious household (*sakinah, mawaddah, wa rahmah*), with mutual respect and responsibility between husband and wife. Symbolically, the egg-stepping ritual reflects these values by portraying the groom's readiness to lead and the bride's devotion to support, which aligns with the KHI's principles of household harmony and shared obligations. Since the ritual does not involve elements of worship or superstition, it can be accepted as a cultural expression that enriches the meaning of marriage without conflicting with Islamic law, thereby demonstrating how adat traditions can coexist with the normative framework of the KHI in Indonesia.

4.2. Islamic Perspectives on the Tradition of Egg-Stepping in Javanese Traditional Weddings

The egg-stepping tradition in Javanese traditional weddings is a symbolic ritual steeped in cultural values and profound philosophical meaning. During the ceremony, the groom steps on a free-range chicken egg placed on a white cloth, and the bride washes her husband's feet with water from a garden flower. This ceremony represents the groom's readiness to assume his role as head of the family and reflects the bride's devotion and loyalty.

In Islam, traditions and customs are an integral part of social life, the existence of which is not necessarily rejected. A fiqh principle states *that* custom can be used as a legal basis as long as it does not conflict with Islamic teachings (Desmuliati et al., 2025; Ma'arif & Mayasaroh, 2025). Therefore, the egg-stepping tradition can be considered legitimate as long as it does not contain elements of polytheism, sinful acts, or anything that demeans human dignity. The egg-stepping ritual does not involve any elements of worship or belief in supernatural powers. Instead, it serves as a form of symbolic communication that represents the couple's readiness and commitment to starting a married life. Therefore, according to Islamic law, the egg-stepping tradition is considered permissible, as long as it is not considered a religious obligation or accompanied by beliefs that conflict with the principles of monotheism. In Javanese tradition, eggs symbolize the beginning of life and the potential for rebirth. When the groom steps on the egg, he is seen as having passed the transition from singlehood to a new life as a husband and father-to-be. In Islam, marriage is also seen as a gateway to a new life filled with responsibilities. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said:

“O young men, whoever among you can afford to get married, let him get married. It is more effective in lowering the gaze and guarding one's chastity.” (Narrated by Bukhari and Muslim)

Thus, the symbolic meaning of the egg as a symbol of the beginning of life and readiness to become a father aligns with Islamic teachings, which emphasize the importance of responsibility and maturity in building a household. The act of a bride washing her husband's feet is often interpreted as a manifestation of loyalty and devotion. In Javanese tradition, this act is not a unilateral act of submission, but rather a manifestation of affection and a commitment to mutual support in married life. Islam also emphasizes the value of mutual respect and service between husband and wife as the foundation of a harmonious relationship.

The Quran states:

“And among His signs is that He created for you mates from among yourselves, that you may find tranquility in them, and He put between you love and compassion.” (Surah Ar-Rum: 21)

Islam also emphasizes the importance of the principles of justice and equality in the relationship between husband and wife. Therefore, the act of washing a husband's feet should not be understood as an absolute obligation or a form of self-abasement. If done as an expression of affection and humility, it can be accepted as part of a cultural expression that does not conflict with Islamic teachings, emphasizing the importance of intention in carrying out a tradition. If a tradition is carried out with the aim of strengthening commitment, fostering a sense of responsibility, and strengthening social bonds, it can be considered an act of worship. However, if its implementation is accompanied by beliefs that deviate from monotheism or contain elements that demean human dignity, then the tradition should be abandoned.

In general, Islam views the egg-stepping tradition in Javanese traditional weddings with an open and contextual approach. As long as it does not conflict with basic principles such as monotheism, morality, and justice, the tradition is not necessarily rejected. The egg-stepping ritual can be accepted as part of a cultural expression that supports marital values, such as responsibility, loyalty, and readiness to build a household. However, it is important to ensure that its implementation is not accompanied by deviant beliefs or actions that demean human dignity. Islam encourages its followers to understand the essence of tradition, select values that align with sharia teachings, and utilize cultural heritage as a means to strengthen morals and social life. In modern society, the egg-stepping tradition remains relevant as a reminder of the importance of mental and spiritual readiness in building a household. Islam strongly emphasizes the importance of intention and readiness in marriage. Marriage is not simply fulfilling social demands, but an act of worship that requires maturity, responsibility, and commitment. This tradition also serves as a means of cultural education that can strengthen family values.

Regarding the Islamic perspective on the egg-stepping tradition, Romli and Habibullah (2018) argue that Islamic law and customary law have a complementary and enriching relationship. As long as a tradition or customary rule does not conflict with sharia principles, it can be strengthened by Islamic teachings. In fact, in several regions of Indonesia, Islamic law has been integrated into the customary legal system. This also applies in the context of Javanese traditional marriage, where various customary provisions regulate the form of marriage, the proposal procedure, the implementation of the wedding ceremony, and even the divorce process. The differences in these rules across regions reflect the diversity of society, customs, religions, and beliefs. For a Muslim, it is appropriate to use Islamic law as the basis and benchmark in assessing customary law, rather than using customary law as a benchmark for Islamic law. In Javanese traditional marriage practices, there are still several processions both before and after the marriage contract that are inconsistent with sharia values and therefore need to be reviewed or eliminated.

The egg-stepping tradition is not a problem, as long as it does not violate Islamic law. In the egg-stepping tradition, the groom steps on a free-range chicken egg with his right foot until it breaks, and then the bride washes his foot with flower water. This procession symbolizes a household led by a responsible husband and accompanied by a good wife, which is expected to result in a harmonious life, including good offspring. Islamic law has an attitude of respect, honor, and responsiveness to the dynamics of the times, including the social, cultural, and

local traditions of a region or country. This is reflected in its flexibility in various forms of wedding ceremonies and customs in commemorating religious holidays, as long as they remain within the corridors of Islamic law (Shofwan & Masturi, 2022).

Indonesia's diverse legal system, in which adat and sharia coexist within the purview of national law, is reflected in the interaction between Islamic law and Javanese customary law. From a conceptual standpoint, Islamic law offers normative direction based on religious principles, whereas adat functions as a living law that encompasses local expertise and cultural identity. Islamic law has a binding role for Muslim communities since Indonesian rules, namely Law No. 1 of 1974 on Marriage, require marriage to be performed in accordance with religious beliefs. However, as long as customs like the egg-stepping ritual do not conflict with sharia, the law does not forbid their continuation.

5. Conclusion

From the perspective of the Compilation of Islamic Law (KHI), the egg-stepping practice can be regarded as acceptable, provided that marriage is carried out in accordance with Islamic principles and that local customs do not conflict with sharia. Therefore, the egg-stepping tradition is not a problem, as long as it does not violate Islamic law. On the other hand, the egg-stepping ritual forms part of the symbolic sequence in Javanese traditional weddings, carrying deep philosophical meaning and cultural significance. Such customs reinforce the normative view that marriage is designed to establish a family, as outlined in the Marriage Law (Law No. 1 of 1974, amended by Law No. 16 of 2019). Consequently, these traditions may influence judicial interpretations, embedding communal values into legal reasoning. Building on this normative analysis, future research could employ qualitative methods to examine the diverse views of contemporary Indonesian Islamic scholars (*ulama*) on this and similar traditions, addressing the community's practical need for contextualized guidance (*fatwa*).

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