

Ritual Syncretism and Legal Validity: A Jurisprudential Analysis of the *Fidyah Semyang* Tradition in Bengkulu

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|| Received: 30-05-2025

| Revised: 25-07-2025

|| Accepted: 09-09-2025

|| Published On: 10-09-2025

Abstract: This study explores the practice of *Fidyah Semyang*, which is a local tradition of the people of Suka Datang Village, North Curup, Bengkulu which is carried out as a form of redemption for the obligation to pray from someone who has died. *Fidyah* is given in the form of gold, money, and fragrances through rituals full of spiritual symbolism. This study aims to understand how this tradition is practiced, as well as how it is positioned within the framework of normative Islamic law which generally does not allow the delegation of bodily worship such as prayer to others, either in the form of *qadha* or *Fidyah*. The method used is qualitative-descriptive with an ethnographic approach and case studies, through in-depth interviews, participatory observations, and literature review of contemporary Islamic jurisprudence and jurisprudence. The results of the study show that *Fidyah Semyang* is a form of religious syncretism that develops from the interaction between Islamic teachings and local customary value structures. Although the practice has a strong social and spiritual function, it faces challenges from Islamic scholars and legal thinkers who consider the tradition to be a form of '*urf fâsîd* (corrupt customs), as it lacks a solid basis in *nash shari'i* and can distort the correct understanding of worship in Islam. In conclusion, *Fidyah Semyang* reflects on the dynamics between cultural religious expression and normative Islamic authority, and shows how local Muslim communities negotiate their religious identities within the framework of ancestral heritage customs and traditions.

Keywords: *Fidyah Semyang*, Syncretism, Death Ceremony, Islamic Law

Abstrak: Tradisi *Fidyah Semyang* merupakan praktik ritual masyarakat Desa Suka Datang, Curup Utara, Bengkulu, yang dilakukan sebagai bentuk penebusan atas kewajiban salat dari seorang anggota keluarga yang telah meninggal dunia. Melalui pemberian emas, uang, dan wewangian dalam prosesi ritual spiritual yang khas, masyarakat meyakini bahwa dosa meninggalkan salat dapat ditebus oleh orang lain atas nama almarhum. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mendeskripsikan bentuk dan simbolisasi praktik ini serta menganalisis validitas hukumnya dalam perspektif fikih Islam. Metodologi yang digunakan adalah kualitatif-deskriptif melalui pendekatan etnografi dan studi kasus, serta dianalisis dengan pendekatan mazhab fikih klasik (terutama Hanafi dan Syafi'i), teori '*urf* dalam *uṣūl al-fiqh*, dan kerangka *maqāṣid al-syarī'ah*. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa meskipun terdapat pandangan yang membolehkan *fidyah* salat mayit dalam kondisi terbatas yaitu dengan adanya wasiat dan bentuk *fidyah* berupa makanan pokok, *Fidyah Semyang* tidak memenuhi syarat-syarat tersebut. Ritual ini lebih banyak didasarkan pada tafsir budaya lokal dan simbolisme spiritual daripada dalil syari'i. Oleh karena itu, dalam perspektif hukum Islam, praktik ini dapat dikategorikan sebagai '*urf fâsîd*, yakni adat yang bertentangan dengan prinsip dasar ibadah mahdah. Kajian ini menunjukkan bahwa sinkretisme religius dalam Islam lokal tidak dapat dilepaskan dari dialektika antara syariat dan adat, serta menegaskan pentingnya pendekatan kontekstual dalam memahami keberagaman masyarakat Muslim Indonesia.

Kata Kunci: *Fidyah Semyang*, Sinkretisme, Upacara Kematian, Hukum Islam

How to cite this article:

Elkhairati and Others, Ritual Syncretism and Legal Validity: A Jurisprudential Analysis of the *Fidyah Semyang* Tradition in Bengkulu, *Jurnal Ilmiah Mizani: Wacana Hukum, Ekonomi Dan Keagamaan*, 12.2 (2025), 497-516
Doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.29300/mzn.v12i2.8252>



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Jurnal Ilmiah Mizani: Wacana Hukum, Ekonomi, dan Keagamaan

Published by Faculty of Sharia, State Islamic University of Fatmawati Sukarno Bengkulu

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Introduction

In the Indonesian Islamic landscape, the relationship between religion and local culture has long been a dynamic arena marked by the tension between theological purity and socially embedded religious practices. Amidst the strong currents of modernization and purist *da'wah* movements, locally rooted religious expressions have not only persisted but, in many cases, evolved into diverse and resilient forms. One such manifestation is the *Fidyah Semyang* tradition, found in the village of Suka Datang, Curup Utara District, Rejang Lebong Regency, Bengkulu. This ritual is performed by the family of the deceased as a form of atonement for missed prayers during their lifetime, through the payment of *fidyah* in the form of gold, money, and fragrant offerings, enacted through a highly symbolic and distinctive ritual.

The *Fidyah Semyang* phenomenon does not exist in isolation; rather, it forms part of a broader belief system that intertwines Islamic values with local customary traditions. The ritual typically takes place shortly after a person's death, often on the seventh or fortieth day of mourning. During the ceremony, a spiritual figure known as the *wasi* leads a series of symbolic acts: gold and money are wrapped in cloth, ritually rotated, and then distributed to the attending congregation. The ritual space is purified, and incense is burned to serve as a spiritual medium. The ceremony is conducted by a group of adult men under the guidance of the *wasi*, or a designated spiritual substitute, who symbolizes the fulfilment of the deceased's prayer obligations. The wrapped offerings are ritually rotated to represent the flow of compensatory worship before being distributed. In addition, the ritual space is cleansed of any images, statues, or

photographs, while fragrances such as incense or *kemenyan* are burned to spiritually invite the soul of the deceased to be present during the ritual.

For the local community, *Fidyah Semyang* is understood as an expression of moral and spiritual responsibility toward deceased family members who had failed to perform obligatory prayers. This practice is seen as a final act of love and reverence and as a means to rescue the deceased from divine punishment for neglecting religious duties. It is underpinned by the belief that the sin of neglected prayer constitutes a spiritual debt to Allah, one that must be repaid, even by others, on behalf of the deceased. Consequently, the ritual is believed to play a role in improving the spiritual standing of the departed before Allah.

For the local community, *Fidyah Semyang* is believed to represent a moral and spiritual responsibility toward deceased family members who did not fulfil their obligation to perform daily prayers (*salat*). This practice is regarded as an expression of compassion and final respect, as well as an effort to save the deceased from the torment of the afterlife due to neglecting *salat*. Sociologically, such motivation reflects the concept of *living law* and intergenerational responsibility within local Islamic traditions, in which law is understood not merely as formal norms, but as a manifestation of collective values that are alive and actively upheld by the community.¹

a traditional leader and key figure in the *Fidyah Semyang* ritual, stated, "If the deceased neglected their prayers, who else would make

¹ Indra Rahmatullah, "Filsafat Hukum Sosiologis (Sociological Jurisprudence); Konsep Dan Aktualisasinya Dalam Hukum Indonesia," *Adalah* 5, no. 2 (2021): 19–32, <https://doi.org/10.15408/adalah.v5i2.21394>.

up for them? As their children, we feel responsible. If we don't do this, their soul will not be at peace. We cannot let that happen." His statement reflects the community's collective view that acts of worship, particularly *salat*, are not solely personal obligations but also become a moral burden shared by the living family members. Another interview with Mrs. Siti Aisyah (47), a family member who had previously performed the ritual, revealed the emotional and spiritual comfort it brings: "We know this might not be taught in formal religious gatherings, but as long as our intentions are sincere and we do not associate partners with Allah, we believe that Allah understands our purpose." Such testimonies indicate that *Fidyah Semyang* is not performed based on systematic jurisprudential understanding, but rather on religious conviction shaped by customary values and spiritual bonds across generations. This view is further supported by field observations showing that the ritual is often imbued with sacred symbols and carried out with sincere intentions by family members. It is not intended as a literal substitution for worship, but as a form of charitable giving and a plea for forgiveness on behalf of the deceased.

A previous study by Shesa, found that although this practice lacks an explicit textual basis (*nash*), it continues to be preserved because it is believed to offer social benefits and inner peace to the bereaved family.² This belief does not stand in isolation. It is shaped by the local cultural structure that emphasizes

the enduring connection between the living and the dead and interprets "spiritual debts" as a legacy of worship that can, and should, be redeemed by the closest kin.

From the perspective of normative Islamic law, however, this tradition has sparked significant debate. The majority of scholars from the Syafi'i, Maliki, and Hanbali schools assert that prayer (*ṣalāh*) is a bodily act of worship (*'ibādah badaniyyah*) that cannot be substituted or delegated to another person, whether during one's lifetime or after death.³ In classical *fiqh*, *fidyah* is only applicable to acts of worship involving wealth, such as *zakat*, *kaffārah*, and certain forms of fasting under specific circumstances.⁴ The practice of *Fidyah Semyang*, which blends symbolic elements with ritual acts and monetary offerings, lacks explicit grounding in either the Qur'an or authentic ḥadīth. As such, some scholars categorize this practice as *'urf fāsid*, a corrupted or invalid custom, namely, a tradition that contradicts the core principles of *sharī'ah*.

Within the framework of Islamic jurisprudence, customary practices or communal traditions are often evaluated through the lens of *'urf*, meaning socially recognized customs within a particular community. In the science of *uṣūl al-fiqh*, *'urf* may be taken into legal consideration, provided it does not conflict with definitive textual evidence (*dalīl shar'ī qath'ī*). However, when a custom contradicts the essential

² Laras Shesa, Riyan Agus Oktor, and Isnaini Isnaini, "Traditional Impacities in The Frame of Worship: A Study of Fidyah Semyang Ritual in Suka Datang Village, North Curup Sub-District," *AJIS: Academic Journal of Islamic Studies* 7, no. 1 (2022): 93, <https://doi.org/10.29240/ajis.v7i1.3443>.

³ Didin Bahrudin Umia Umia, H. Rajab, Roswati Nurdin, "Badal Haji: Analisis Kritis Pandangan Mazhab Maliki Dan Mazhab Syafi'i," *Jurnal Al-Muqaranah* 1, no. Maret (2023): 15–16, <https://jurnal.iainambon.ac.id/index.php/am/article/view/5500>.

⁴ Ali Hidayat and Tasnim Rahman Fitra, "Pembayaran Fidyah Shalat Dengan Emas Bagi Orang Yang Sudah Meninggal : Perspektif Mazhab Syafi ' i Dan Hanafi" 1, no. 1 (2024): 15–30.

principles of the *sharī'ah* or has the potential to distort the correct understanding of established acts of worship, it is classified as *ʿurf fāsid*. This term refers to traditions that run counter to scriptural sources and threaten the doctrinal clarity of worship. It is therefore critical to assess whether a cultural practice like Fidyah Semyang qualifies as *ʿurf ṣaḥīḥ* (a sound and valid custom) or rather falls under the category of *ʿurf fāsid*, especially when it involves *ʿibādah maḥḍah*, pure acts of worship, that, according to Islamic jurisprudence, are inherently personal and non-transferable.

This is precisely where the academic unease underlying this study begins to emerge. Can the practice of Fidyah Semyang be justified as a form of local *ijtihād* and a manifestation of the living law of Indonesian Muslims? Or does it constitute a deviation from normative Islamic teachings that must be corrected? Why do communities continue to preserve this tradition despite the absence of clear textual evidence from the *Qur'an* and *ḥadīth*? How do they collectively construct religious meaning and justification for this practice? And how does Islamic law position itself amid the dynamic interplay between cultural tradition and *sharī'ah* in cases such as this?

The array of questions raised reflects a discernible gap between the religious practices of local communities and the formal understanding of Islamic law as developed among academics and fatwa-issuing institutions. This discrepancy extends beyond the realm of *fiqh* to encompass sociological and anthropological dimensions, particularly in understanding how Islam is internalized and practiced by lay communities within specific socio-cultural contexts. In reality, Islam does not manifest in a cultural vacuum; rather, it

constantly engages in dialogue with pre-existing cultural structures deeply rooted in society. This dynamic interaction gives rise to unique forms of religious expression, as exemplified by the practice of Fidyah Semyang, which emerges from the intersection of Islamic legal norms and the indigenous values of the Rejang community. However, this dialogue is not always harmonious, often resulting in tension between normative *fiqh* interpretations and grassroots religious practices.

Such tension underpins the rationale for employing a contextual *uṣūl al-fiqh* approach and the theory of living law, both of which acknowledge that law is not confined to textual sources but also lives and evolves within the social practices of communities. Accordingly, any evaluation of local religious practices must take into account the socio-cultural dynamics and the ongoing negotiation of meaning among adherents. In this regard, the theory of religious syncretism is also pertinent in explaining how Islamic teachings are blended with customary heritage in ritual forms that are symbolic yet often imbued with genuine spirituality and faith.

The primary aim of this study is to explore the phenomenon of Fidyah Semyang within the framework of religious syncretism among Muslims in the village of Suka Datang. Specifically, this research seeks to: (1) describe the forms, symbols, and procedural stages of Fidyah Semyang as a localized religious rite; (2) analyse how the local community frames its understanding of this practice from spiritual, social, and religious perspectives; and (3) evaluate the practice through the lens of normative Islamic law and the principle of *ʿurf* in *uṣūl al-fiqh*. In addition, the study aims to (4) examine the negotiation process between customary traditions and Islamic law

within rural Muslim societies, and (5) offer a more equitable and contextualized analytical framework for understanding expressions of religiosity that diverge from normative doctrinal formulations.

In terms of scientific novelty, this study contributes to two main aspects. First, substantively, Fidyah Semyang represents a ritual practice that has not been widely or deeply explored in the academic literature. Most studies on Islamic syncretism in Indonesia have focused on more general religious rituals, such as sea offerings (*sedekah laut*), commemorations (*haul*), or the celebration of the Prophet's birthday (*maulid*). This research brings to the fore a more specific and controversial practice, namely, the symbolic redemption of missed prayers on behalf of the deceased through *fidyah* offerings. Second, in terms of approach, the study combines a normative perspective (Islamic jurisprudence) with an anthropological lens, thus bridging religious texts with the social contexts in which they are embedded. This integrative approach is essential for developing a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted nature of Islamic religiosity in Indonesia.

Theoretically, this research employs the concept of *'urf* in *uṣūl al-fiqh* (Islamic legal theory) as an analytical tool, examining local practices within an Islamic legal framework that accommodates cultural expressions, provided they do not contradict textual injunctions (*nash*).⁵ At the same time, this study critically evaluates whether *Fidyah Semyang* can be classified as *'urf ṣaḥīḥ* (legitimate custom) or rather as *'urf fāsid*

(invalid custom). This is where contextual analysis becomes crucial: the meaning and purpose of the ritual cannot be separated from the historical and sociocultural conditions of its practitioners.

Practically, the study also offers significant implications for Islamic preaching (*da'wah*) and religious education discourse. Understanding phenomena such as *Fidyah Semyang* can assist preachers, religious educators, and policymakers in designing more thoughtful and context-sensitive strategies for community engagement. Rather than simply condemning such practices, a deep appreciation of their sociocultural foundations and symbolic meanings may open space for constructive dialogue between normative Islam and cultural Islam.

In recent years, scholars have increasingly focused their attention on local religious practices that intersect with Islamic legal norms. A significant study in this context was conducted by Akhmad Hulaify, Zakiyah, and Syahrani, as presented in their article titled "*The Mechanism of Paying Fidyah with Gold for Deceased Individuals in Gambah Luar Village, Kandangan Sub-District*," published in *Jurnal Al-Iqtishadiyah*. This research examines the practice of offering *fidyah* in the form of gold as compensation for missed prayers of the deceased. The findings reveal that, while this tradition is rooted in local cultural values, it remains contentious from the perspective of Islamic jurisprudence, particularly because the form of *fidyah*, gold, deviates from the classical *fiqh* stipulation that it should consist of staple food.⁶

Further exploration into this topic is found in the work of Nurkholis Sofwan, titled

⁵ Ach Maimun, "Memperkuat 'Urf Dalam Pengembangan Hukum Islam," *Al-Ihkam: Jurnal Hukum & Pranata Sosial* 12, no. 1 (2017): 22, <https://doi.org/10.19105/al-ihkam.v12i1.1188>.

⁶ Akhmad Hulaify et al., "ISSN Elektronik: 2442-2282 Volume: III, Nomor I, Juni 2017," 2017, 25–35.

“Living Hadith: A Study on the Tradition of Fidyah for Prayer and Fasting on Behalf of Deceased Individuals in Indramayu.” This study investigates how hadiths related to *fidyah* are disseminated among the public through religious teachings and subsequently transformed into ritual practices intended to compensate for the prayer and fasting obligations of the deceased. Sofwan emphasizes the processes of transmission and internalization of religious understanding within local contexts, highlighting the community's interpretive flexibility toward normative Islamic sources.⁷

The study most directly related to this topic is the article by Laras Shesa, Agus Riyan Oktori, and Isnaini, titled “Traditional Impacities in the Frame of Worship: A Study of the Fidyah Semyang Ritual in Suka Datang Village, North Curup Sub-District,” published in *AJIS: Academic Journal of Islamic Studies*. This article provides an in-depth analysis of the Fidyah Semyang ritual, a posthumous religious practice involving gold, money, and fragrances as a symbolic atonement for the prayers left unperformed by the deceased. The researchers conclude that, although rich in spiritual and social value, the practice falls under the category of *‘urf fāsid* (corrupt custom) due to its lack of explicit basis in scriptural sources and its potential to be misinterpreted as a legitimate substitute for the formal obligation of prayer.⁸

Meanwhile, the study of cultural adaptation within Islamic law has also been

explored by M. Faiq Fadli and Taufiq Azis in their article titled “The Concept of ‘Urf in Contemporary Fiqh and Its Relevance to Local Traditions”, published in *Jurnal Al-Ijtima’i*. Although their research does not specifically address the issue of *fidyah*, it provides a crucial theoretical framework for understanding how *‘urf*, as a source of Islamic law, can be employed to interpret and evaluate local cultural practices. This perspective becomes particularly relevant when assessing whether a tradition such as Fidyah Semyang qualifies as *‘urf ṣaḥīḥ* (legitimate custom) or *‘urf fāsid* (corrupt custom).⁹

In addition, a study by Mohamad Ichwanuddin, entitled “Local Traditions and Islamic Law: A Critical Review of Death Ritual Practices in Madura”, published in *Jurnal Al-Manahij*, offers a critical insight into the interaction between custom (*adat*) and *sharī‘ah*. Ichwanuddin outlines how the Madurese community maintains certain rituals not explicitly found in classical *fiqh* texts, yet performed with a strong sense of religious devotion. This highlights that the phenomenon such as Fidyah Semyang is not an isolated case, but rather part of a broader pattern of syncretism within local expressions of Islam (Ichwanuddin, 2020).

Finally, the article by Yayan Sopyan and Rini Sari Dewi, titled “Ritual and Religiosity: An Anthropological Analysis of Religious Traditions in Sundanese Society”, published in *Jurnal Humaniora Islamika*, underscores that the rituals such as *tahlilan*, *nyekar*, and the offering of alms on behalf of the deceased

⁷ Nurkholis Sofwan, “Living Hadis : Studi Atas Fenomena Tradisi Fidyah Salat Dan Puasa Bagi Orang Meninggal Di Indramayu,” January 15, 2018, <https://repository.uinjkt.ac.id/dspace/handle/123456789/37820>.

⁸ Shesa, Oktori, and Isnaini, “Traditional Impacities in The Frame of Worship: A Study of Fidyah Semyang Ritual in Suka Datang Village, North Curup Sub-District.”

⁹ Tsana’ and Hisan Mursalin, “Analisis Kejadian Dan Pendapat Ulama Mengenai Pelaksanaan Shalat Idul Fitri Di Mahad Al-Zaytun,” *Mauriduna: Journal of Islamic Studies* 4, no. 2 (2023): 139–54, <https://doi.org/10.37274/mauriduna.v4i2.835>.

serve as symbolic expressions of local faith. Although it does not directly address *fidyah*, the study lays a foundation for understanding how religious expressions in the form of death rituals often become a space of negotiation between spiritual convictions and the normative pressures of religious law (Sopyan & Dewi, 2023).

Based on these various studies, it can be concluded that practices such as *Fidyah Semyang* represent a complex phenomenon, namely, the intersection between normative Islamic doctrine and religious expressions shaped by local social and cultural constructions. However, to date, there has been limited scholarly research specifically examining *Fidyah Semyang* from the perspectives of religious syncretism and the construction of Islamic law. This study, therefore, seeks to fill that scholarly gap and contribute to the broader discourse on local expressions of Islam in Indonesia.

Method

This study employed a qualitative approach, specifically field research, integrating ethnographic methods and case study design. The ethnographic approach was chosen to capture the cultural meanings, spiritual symbolism, and local narratives embedded within the practice of *Fidyah Semyang*. Meanwhile, the case study method enabled an in-depth investigation of this phenomenon as a distinct and unique religious practice within a specific community. The research site was located in Suka Datang Village, North Curup Subdistrict, Rejang Lebong Regency, Bengkulu Province, with an estimated population of approximately 1,500 people. The community's social structure is communal in nature, with significant influence from traditional leaders, religious figures, and

spiritual guides known as *wasi*. The *Fidyah Semyang* tradition remains actively practiced within families and community settings, characterized by a collective sense of responsibility.

Informants were selected using purposive sampling, followed by snowball sampling to identify ritual practitioners, traditional elders, and community members who had either organized or participated in the ritual processions. A total of twelve informants were interviewed, including two traditional leaders, two *wasi*, three heirs of ritual performers, and five community members with knowledge of or involvement in the practice. Inclusion criteria encompassed individuals with direct experience of the *fidyah* prayer ritual for the deceased, a minimum age of 30 years, and the ability to articulate the symbolic meanings and spiritual narratives associated with the practice.

Participant observation was conducted over a three-week period, involving the researcher's direct engagement in two *Fidyah Semyang* rituals. Observations extended to the preparation, performance, and post-ritual phases. Informal interactions and systematic field notes were used to document non-verbal, symbolic, and spiritual dimensions of the practice.

Documentary data were collected from personal records of residents, local religious manuscripts, family archives of ritual performers, and observations of the recited texts used during the rituals. Additionally, a fiqh literature analysis was conducted, drawing upon classical works from the Shafi'i and Hanafi schools, such as *al-Majmū'* by al-Nawawī and *al-Hidāyah* by al-Marghīnānī, as well as contemporary references including fatwas from the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) and locally published Islamic

jurisprudence. Document selection was based on relevance to the topic, source authenticity, and alignment with Islamic legal frameworks concerning *'urf* (customary practice) and *'ibādah maḥḍah* (pure acts of worship).

Result and Discussion

Description of the Fidyah Semyang Practice

The practice of *Fidyah Semyang* in Suka Datang Village, Curup Utara District, Rejang Lebong Regency, is a long-standing religious tradition that has been passed down through generations. It constitutes an integral part of the local community's rituals for commemorating and praying for the deceased. This tradition is carried out by the deceased's family as a form of atonement for the obligatory prayers (*salat*) that were neglected during the individual's lifetime. Within the community's belief system, abandoning *salat* is considered a grave sin that cannot be left unaddressed; hence, it must be expiated through a ritual process believed to hold spiritual significance and to influence the soul's condition in the afterlife.

Based on interviews with 8 out of 12 informants, including customary leaders and heirs, the tradition has been recognized and practiced at least since the time of their grandparents. It continues to be transmitted orally and through direct involvement across generations. One of the community elders, Mr. Ali (61), remarked, "Since the time of our parents, this has been common. Whenever someone passes away, we immediately prepare their *semyang salat*." The researcher's observations of two ritual performances further revealed intergenerational participation, from youth to village elders, in the preparation and execution of the entire ceremony.

The *Fidyah Semyang* ritual is conducted in

a solemn and private setting. The deceased's family prepares several symbolic items essential to the ceremony: gold, cash, white cloth for wrapping, and fragrances such as incense or *kemenyan*. Each of these items holds sacred meaning and serves as a medium for atonement and spiritual connection between the realm of the living and the spirit world. The gold and money are wrapped in white cloth and ritually rotated, a process known as *disemayang*, by a ritual leader while reciting a specific intention (*niyyah*). The gold, often borrowed temporarily from the community, is typically returned after the ritual concludes, while the money is usually distributed among recipients designated to receive the *fidyah*.

The ritual sequence begins with the preparation of the designated space. This ritual space is sanctified by removing elements believed to obstruct the descent of angels, such as images, paintings, statues, and photographs. All such items must be taken down, and the atmosphere is intentionally made quiet and serene. Fragrant substances are burned as part of the process of "summoning the spirit," based on the belief that the aroma assists the spirit of the deceased in being present to witness or receive the ritual of redemption. During field observation, the researcher noted that the burning of incense was carried out from the beginning to the end of the ritual, with incense placed in all four corners of the room and one at the center. One informant explained, "This fragrant smoke is so the spirit can enter peacefully. We believe the pleasant scent invites angels, but also calms the spirit of our family member who comes" (Interview, Ibu Sri, 48 years old). The symbolic meaning of this act is transmitted not only orally but also performed by the ritual leader (*wasi*), who

carefully lights the incense while quietly and reverently reciting the ritual intention. In this context, fragrance serves as a spiritual medium that connects the human realm with the realm of spirits, believed to facilitate the ritual of “redemptive worship” through an inwardly sacred and spiritually conducive atmosphere. Following the sanctification, the main ritual commences with the recitation of intention by a spiritual figure known as the *wasi*, a ritual leader who symbolically performs the prayer on behalf of the deceased.

The individuals involved in this ritual can be classified into three main groups: (1) the *wasi*, or ritual leader, typically someone regarded as pious and knowledgeable about the procedures of *Fidyah Semyang*; (2) the *jamaah*, or recipients of the fidyah, comprising participants who take part in the procession and receive a portion of the fidyah; and (3) the family of the deceased, who serve as the primary executors and bear the responsibility for the ritual. The *wasi* recites the intention (*niyyah*), while gold and money are circulated among the attending *jamaah*, with the number of rounds adjusted according to the number of prayers the deceased had failed to perform, calculated per day, typically six rounds for the five obligatory prayers and one additional sunnah prayer.

The number of rounds in the *Fidyah Semyang* ritual is generally adjusted based on an estimated count of obligatory prayers missed by the deceased during their lifetime. This information is typically provided by the family, relying on their knowledge of the deceased’s religious observance prior to death. In practice, however, there is variation in the number of rounds, ranging from daily calculations, such as six rounds representing the five obligatory prayers and one recommended (*sunnah*) prayer each day, to

symbolic accumulations over a week or even forty days, depending on the family’s decision and the guidance of the *wasi* (ritual guide). In cases where the family is uncertain about the precise number of missed prayers, a symbolic approach is adopted. As Mr. Yusuf (56), one of the ritual leaders, explained: “We use a reference of seven days, multiplied by six, so 42 rounds, just to be safe. Because we don’t know the exact number, but the intention is to make up for all of them.” Based on the researcher’s observation, the ritual involves passing a cloth containing gold and money among congregants seated in a circle, accompanied by a specific counting whispered by the *wasi*. Although there is no fixed jurisprudential standard for the number of rounds, the community treats this count as a sincere spiritual effort to atone for the missed prayers, emphasizing symbolic and spiritual dimensions rather than legalistic precision.

Although there is a general pattern in the implementation of the *Fidyah Semyang* ritual, communities exhibit notable variation in choosing the timing of the ceremony. Traditionally, many families opt to perform it on the seventh, fortieth, or hundredth day after a person’s death, following the broader structure of mortuary customs among the Rejang people. However, there are also families who conduct the ritual immediately after death, or even before the body is buried. Based on interviews with five informants, the reasons for this variation are diverse. Some believe that performing the ritual earlier accelerates the redemption of missed prayers and eases the burden of the deceased’s soul in the afterlife. “If it can be done before the burial, that’s even better, so the debt of worship can be settled right away,” said Pak Hendra (42), who once served as the ritual officiant for his own family. On the other

hand, some families delay the ritual due to practical considerations, such as waiting for relatives to gather or securing the necessary funds and ceremonial items. Several informants also mentioned that certain days, such as Thursday nights or specific months in the Hijri calendar, are believed to be spiritually more “open,” making them more auspicious for conducting the ritual. This variation suggests that, while there is an overarching traditional framework, the practice of *Fidyah Semyang* remains flexible and is significantly shaped by local beliefs and each family’s social circumstances. In the community’s perception, the primary purpose of the *Fidyah Semyang* ritual is to redeem the unfulfilled obligation of daily prayers (*salat*) that the deceased may have missed during their lifetime. As such, the ritual serves as a familial responsibility to the departed, as well as an expression of affection and final respect. Within this context, *Fidyah Semyang* is not merely understood as a religious obligation, but also as a symbolic expression of emotional and spiritual bonds between the living and the dead. It embodies profound religious and social meanings, functioning as a path of redemption believed to enhance the spiritual condition of the deceased in the sight of Allah.

From a social perspective, *fidyah* is regarded as a moral and social responsibility of the family, particularly of the children or close relatives, toward their deceased parents or other family members. By performing this ritual, the family feels they have fulfilled an inherited “spiritual debt,” while also demonstrating their loyalty, affection, and final act of devotion to the departed. In a society that continues to uphold strong family values and intergenerational bonds, such actions carry profound symbolic weight, not merely as obligations, but as expressions of

spiritual love that transcend the boundaries of life and death.

Beyond this, *fidyah* is also interpreted as a path to salvation, both for the deceased and for the family members who remain. For the deceased, *fidyah* is believed to serve as a means of expiating sins, or at the very least, mitigating the torment of the grave resulting from unfulfilled prayer obligations. For the family, the ritual brings a sense of inner peace and emotional relief, stemming from the belief that they have fulfilled a sacred duty to a loved one. In this sense, *fidyah* functions as a medium for cultivating collective tranquillity, easing feelings of guilt, religious anxiety, and fears about the afterlife.

From the perspective of local religiosity, the community firmly believes in the interconnectedness between the world of the living and the spirits of the deceased, especially during ritual moments such as *Fidyah Semyang*. This ritual is perceived as a spiritual bridge that allows the soul of the departed to be invisibly present among their family, witnessing and receiving the redemption performed on their behalf. As a result, the execution of the ritual is carried out with deep reverence and within a sacred atmosphere. The space is cleansed of worldly elements such as photographs or paintings, silence is maintained, and fragrant incense is burned to create a tranquil spiritual environment so that angels may descend without obstruction. These ritual preparations reflect a communal belief that the realm of spirits is not entirely severed from the human world, but can be connected through sacred ritual channels.

These layers of meaning reveal that *Fidyah Semyang* is far more than a mere substitutional act of worship; it constitutes a symbolic system imbued with emotional,

social, and spiritual significance. It serves as a means of reconciliation between the living and the dead, between sin and redemption, and between humans and Allah. In the context of the Rejang community in Suka Datang, *fidyah* is not merely a doctrinal practice, but a collective narrative that shapes their understanding of life, death, and ultimate salvation within the framework of local Islamic culture.

Religious Syncretism: The Integration of Islam and Customary Traditions

Syncretism generally refers to the process of blending or merging two or more belief systems, cultural practices, or religious values into a new and distinctive system. In the context of religious studies, syncretism is understood as the result of interaction between a dominant belief system, typically a major world religion such as Islam, and local belief systems or pre-religious traditions. This interaction gives rise to religious expressions that do not fully conform to the normative doctrines of the dominant religion, yet still retain its essential elements.

Etymologically, the term *syncretism* derives from the Greek word *synkretismos*, which originally referred to the “coalition of Cretans”, a concept denoting the unification of disparate elements for a common purpose.¹⁰ In the disciplines of the sociology of religion and anthropology, syncretism is not merely seen as a deviation or dilution of original doctrines; rather, it is interpreted as a form of creative adaptation by a community in response to social change, the spread of new religious teachings, or external pressures.

According to Robert Redfield, syncretism is embedded in the framework of the “great tradition and little tradition,” referring to the dynamic interplay between the grand, normative teachings of a universal religion and the localized, evolving folk beliefs of a particular society.¹¹ Syncretism emerges when these major traditions encounter and merge with local elements, without necessarily erasing the prior belief systems. This notion is further reinforced by Clifford Geertz in his study of Islam in Java, where he illustrates that Islamic practice is far from monolithic. Instead, it is differentiated among *santri*, *abangan*, and *priyayi* groups, each exhibiting varying degrees of syncretic orientation.¹²

Within the context of Islam, syncretism manifests as an interaction between normative Islamic teachings and pre-existing local customs and traditions.¹³ When Islam entered the Indonesian archipelago, it did not entirely displace indigenous practices; rather, it engaged in a process of negotiation with them. This resulted in localized expressions of Islam, such as *slametan*, *tahlilan*, *ziarah kubur*, and, in the context of this discussion, *Fidyah Semyang*. Although these practices may lack firm grounding in the primary Islamic texts (*nash syar’i*), they continue to be observed by local communities due to their perceived symbolic, social, and spiritual significance.

¹⁰ Ros Aiza Mohd Mokhtar and Che Zarrina Sa’ari, “Sinkretisme Dalam Adat Tradisi Masyarakat Islam,” *Journal of Usuluddin* 43, no. 1 (2016): 69–90, <https://doi.org/10.22452/usuluddin.vol43no1.3>.

¹¹ Puput Mulyono, “Sosialisasi Silaturahmi Pada Acara Halal Bi Halal Socialization of Social Piety in Halal Bi Halal Events Universitas Duta Bangsa Surakarta , Indonesia Dalam Jurnal Ini Peneliti Ingin Membahas Perkembangan Tradisi Besar Dan Tradisi Kecil Di Jawa . Jawa Ada,” *Jurnal, Jpkmi Kepada, Pengabdian Indonesia, Masyarakat*, no. April (2025).

¹² Yusno Abdullah Otta, “Dinamisasi Tradisi Islam Di Era Globalisasi: Studi Atas Tradisi Keagamaan Kampung Jawa Tondano,” *Jurnal Sosiologi Reflektif* 10, no. 1 (2016): 85–114, <https://doi.org/10.14421/jsr.v10i1.1153>.

¹³ Mohd Mokhtar and Sa’ari, “Sinkretisme Dalam Adat Tradisi Masyarakat Islam.”

Several scholars view syncretism as a form of cultural integration that enriches religious dynamics. However, from other perspectives, particularly puritan or legalistic viewpoints, syncretism is often regarded as a deviation (*bid'ah*) or a manifestation of '*urf fāsid*, due to its incorporation of elements deemed inconsistent with Islamic law. Thus, the theory of syncretism also invites critical reflection on the notion of religious purity, as religion is, in practice, always shaped through a dialectical process with the social and cultural contexts in which it is lived.

In the context of *Fidyah Semyang*, syncretism theory helps explain why the practice of compensating missed prayers with gold or money continues to be preserved by the local community, despite its divergence from normative *fiqh* rulings. *Fidyah Semyang* reflects a local effort either to Islamize ancestral traditions or, conversely, to indigenize Islam in a form that is culturally acceptable. This represents a distinct form of Islamic syncretism in Indonesia, not merely a mixture of elements, but a culturally situated reinterpretation of religious teachings. It is a process of social hermeneutics, where Islamic values are reimaged within the framework of local tradition.

The phenomenon of *Fidyah Semyang* in the village of Suka Datang exemplifies a religious syncretic process, the convergence of Islamic teachings with the indigenous culture of the Rejang people, sustained across generations. Syncretism in this context is not a mechanical fusion of two belief systems, but rather a complex and selective integration, where elements of Islam are embraced, internalized, and adapted to an already established cultural structure. Islam enters a community with its own deeply rooted spiritual values, and through this encounter, a

symbolic negotiation takes place, giving rise to distinctive religious practices such as *Fidyah Semyang*.

Historically, the Rejang people have upheld a strong tradition of honouring their ancestors and maintaining a profound sense of intergenerational responsibility.¹⁴ When Islam was introduced with its teachings on the obligation of prayer and the consequences for neglecting it, these religious principles did not immediately replace the existing cultural system. Instead, they were practiced alongside traditional beliefs and gradually underwent a process of cultural reformulation. *Fidyah*, which in Islamic jurisprudence is primarily associated with fasting and wealth-based worship (*ibadah maliyah*), was later reconstructed within the context of missed prayers of the deceased, utilizing gold and money as symbolically charged mediums. In the local cultural framework, gold is not merely perceived as an object of economic value, but also as a symbol of purity, honour, and spiritual sincerity. Therefore, the offering of gold in the *Fidyah Semyang* ritual represents a form of sacrifice and redemption deemed equivalent in value to the act of worship itself.

In practice, the *Fidyah Semyang* ritual illustrates how the community reconstructs religious teachings into cultural symbols that are comprehensible and transmissible across generations. Prayer, which normatively constitutes a personal bodily obligation, is symbolically reinterpreted as a moral burden that can be transferred through ritual intermediaries. These include spiritual figures

¹⁴ Silvia Devi, "Orang Rejang Dan Hukum Adatnya: Tafsiran Atas Kelpeak Ukum Adat Ngen Ca'O Kutei Jang Kabupaten Rejang Lebong," *Jurnal Antropologi: Isu-Isu Sosial Budaya* 18, no. 1 (2016): 39, <https://doi.org/10.25077/jantro.v18i1.54>.

(wasi), sacred objects (gold, white cloth, incense), and symbolic acts such as object rotation or the recitation of specific intentions. This dynamic reveals that the Rejang community did not outright reject Islamic values, but rather transformed them into forms aligned with their cultural horizon.

Thus, *Fidyah Semyang* emerges as a product of the longstanding interaction between Islam and Rejang customary traditions, not merely as a mystical legacy of the past, but as a living expression of the community's spiritual quest for harmony between religious doctrine and their socio-cultural reality. In this practice, Islamic values are not lost; instead, they are reinterpreted within the framework of local belief systems. Nevertheless, such syncretic processes inevitably generate epistemological tensions, particularly when viewed through the lens of normative Islamic jurisprudence, which bases the validity of worship on textual evidence and strict adherence to madhhab (legal school) principles.

This phenomenon demonstrates that society does not always practice Islam in a strictly literal sense; instead, it engages in a complex process in which religious teachings are interpreted, reinterpreted, and adapted to historical, social, and cultural contexts. Therefore, *Fidyah Semyang* cannot be understood solely through a legal-formal lens but must be viewed as a reconstructed form of worship framed within the symbolic fabric of local culture. This reflects the essence of religious syncretism in Indonesian local Islam, an openness to adaptation, contextual negotiation, and creative interpretation that enables Islam to grow organically within indigenous communities.¹⁵

¹⁵ Tri Eka Putra Muhtarivansyah Waruwu, "Analisis

Theological, Jurisprudential, and Theoretical Implications Analysis of Fidyah for Missed Prayers

From the perspective of Islamic law, acts of worship possess a unique dimension that extends beyond their formal rituals.¹⁶ Worship is deeply rooted in its essential nature as a form of servitude to [Allah]. *Ṣalāh* (prayer) is classified as *ʿibādah mahdhah*, a pure form of worship, with strict and specific legal requirements concerning its conditions, pillars, and procedural execution. The Qur'an clearly establishes *ṣalāh* as a divinely mandated obligation upon every believer, with no ambiguity regarding its personal responsibility and prescribed times:

"Indeed, performing prayers is a duty on the believers at the appointed times" (Qur'an, An-Nisā': 103).

There is no explicit evidence in either the Qur'an or authentic hadiths that permits the substitution or compensation of prayer by another person. This includes making up missed prayers (*qada'*) by an heir or offering *fidyah* in the form of wealth.

In the case of *fidyah*, Islamic law permits the substitution of certain religious obligations under specific circumstances, particularly in relation to fasting. Allah states in Surah Al-Baqarah [2:184]:

"(Fasting for) a limited number of days. So, whoever among you is ill or on a journey (during them) – then an equal number of days (are to be made up). And upon those who are able (to fast, but with hardship) – a ransom (as

Yuridis Normatif Terhadap Konsep Masalah Perkawinan Di Usia Muda," *Syarah: Jurnal Hukum Islam* 9, no. 2 (2020): 1–23.

¹⁶ Chusainul Adib, "Peran Negara Dalam Pengelolaan Zakat Umat Islam Di Indonesia," *Jurnal Nestor Magister Hukum* 13, no. 1 (2017): 1–28, <https://jurnal.untan.ac.id/index.php/nestor/article/view/22564>.

substitute) of feeding a poor person (each day). And whoever volunteers excess – it is better for him. But to fast is best for you, if you only knew."

This verse serves as the foundational basis for the permissibility of *fidyah*, yet its application is confined to the act of fasting and only under excusable conditions, such as chronic illness or old age.¹⁷ Meanwhile, there is no authentic textual evidence indicating that prayers (*ṣalāh*) can be substituted or redeemed through *fidyah* in the form of gold, money, or other material offerings. Therefore, it becomes necessary to explore the perspectives of the various Islamic legal schools (*madhāhib*) regarding this matter.

In the Shāfi'i school of thought, which is the predominant madhhab in Indonesia, acts of worship such as prayer (*ṣalāh*) cannot be performed by others on behalf of the deceased, nor can they be compensated through *fidyah* (a form of religious compensation). If a person passes away with outstanding prayers, their heirs bear no obligation to make amends, except by offering prayers for mercy and forgiveness on the deceased's behalf. Imam al-Nawawī affirms that prayer is a direct, personal act of worship between the servant and Allah, and thus cannot be substituted by another.

The Mālikī and Ḥanbalī schools uphold a similar position, maintaining that bodily acts of worship like prayer are non-transferable, neither during one's lifetime nor after death. Imam Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal even asserted that "it is invalid for someone to pray on behalf of another, and there is no *fidyah* for prayer."

The Ḥanafī school, however, offers a slightly different perspective. Within Ḥanafī

jurisprudence, there exists a view that if a person, before death, explicitly instructed that *fidyah* be given for missed prayers, then it is permissible for the heirs to allocate such *fidyah* from up to one-third of the inheritance. The prescribed form of *fidyah* involves feeding a poor person with an amount equivalent to one *mudd* (approximately 675 grams of staple food) for each missed prayer. Even in this context, *fidyah* is regarded as an alternative rather than a binding obligation, and its legitimacy hinges on the presence of a valid bequest from the deceased.

Worship, as a form of a creature's devotion to the Creator who brought it into existence, is a logical consequence of gratitude for being created. In general, religious practices, when considered in terms of whether they can be performed by others, may be classified into three categories: *Ibadah Badaniyah Mahdlah*, *Ibadah Maliyah Mahdlah*, and *Ibadah Maliyah Ghayr Mahdlah*.

Ibadah Badaniyah Mahdlah refers to purely physical acts of worship, such as prayer (*shalat*) and fasting (*sawm*). In contrast, *Ibadah Maliyah Mahdlah* consists solely of material-based acts of worship, such as the giving of *zakat* and *sadaqah*. Meanwhile, *Ibadah Maliyah Ghayr Mahdlah* encompasses acts of worship that involve both material contributions and physical performance, such as the pilgrimage of *Hajj* and *Umrah*.

Among these three categories, *Ibadah Badaniyah Mahdlah* cannot be performed on behalf of another person, with the exception of voluntary *tawaf* prayers, which are part of the larger pilgrimage rituals. On the other hand, *Ibadah Maliyah Mahdlah* may be fulfilled entirely by another individual on behalf of someone else. However, *Ibadah Maliyah Ghayr Mahdlah* may only be performed by a proxy when the original individual faces a legitimate

¹⁷ Lukman Arake, "Agama Dan Negara Perspektif Fiqh Siyasah," *Al-Adalah: Jurnal Hukum Dan Politik Islam*, 2019, <https://doi.org/10.35673/ajmpi.v3i2.200>.

impediment (*udzur*), and even then, the proxy must have previously completed the act themselves.¹⁸

All categories of obligatory worship, whether originally prescribed as such (*‘azimah*) or made obligatory due to a vow (*nadzar*), become a form of debt (*dayn*) owed to Allah if not performed within their designated time. As such, they are binding and must be fulfilled. Referring to the previous explanation, if the unperformed obligation falls under the category of *‘ibadah māliyyah mahdhah* (purely financial worship) or *‘ibadah māliyyah ghayr mahdhah* (worship with both financial and physical elements), scholars unanimously agree that such obligations can be fulfilled by another person on behalf of the one indebted. However, when the obligation pertains to *‘ibadah badaniyyah mahdhah* (purely physical acts of worship), scholars differ in opinion. Scholars from the Hanafī and Mālikī schools generally prohibit the fulfilment of such obligations by another person, except in cases involving *fidyah* (compensatory offerings for missed fasts) and *kaffārah* (expiation), which may be performed by someone else if the person in debt explicitly included it in their will, according to Hanafī scholars.¹⁹ Their position is based on the following hadith:²⁰

“A person may not perform prayer or fasting on behalf of another.”

As for the Shāfi‘ī school, there are two

main positions. The first maintains that the debt of *‘ibadah mahdhah* cannot be fulfilled by another person, not even by the deceased’s legal guardian. However, the *qawl qadīm* (earlier opinion) within the Shāfi‘ī tradition permits such obligations to be performed by others, and this view was endorsed and issued as a fatwa by Imam al-Subkī.

Meanwhile, the Hanbali scholars make a distinction between bodily acts of worship (*‘ibadah badaniyyah mahdhah*) that are originally obligatory and those that become obligatory due to a vow (*nadzar*). For acts that are originally obligatory, they cannot be performed by another person on behalf of the individual. However, those that become obligatory due to a vow may be fulfilled by someone else.

Specifically, within the Shāfi‘ī school of thought, there exists a *wajh* (an alternative legal opinion) which asserts that a debt of missed prayers may be discharged by offering food, with one *mud* of food for each missed prayer. This opinion has even been widely adopted by many Shāfi‘ī scholars²¹

As cited by Sulaymān al-Jamal, al-‘Abbādī reports from Imām al-Shāfi‘ī and others who transmitted from Ishāq ibn Rāhawayh and ‘Aṭā’, and also Ibn Burhān conveys from Qawl Qadīm (the earlier opinion) of al-Shāfi‘ī, that the legal guardian (*wali*) is obliged to compensate for the missed prayers of their deceased relative. In fact, according to one *wajh*, this compensation can be carried out by offering one *mud* of food for each missed prayer.²²

¹⁸ Abū Bakr ‘Utsmān bin Muhammad Syaththā, *Hāsiyyah l’ānah Al Thālibīn* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyah, 1995).

¹⁹ Wizarah al-Awqaf wal- Syu’un Al-Islamiyah, *Al-Mawsu’ah Al-Fiqhiyyah Al-Kuwwaytiyyah*, 2nd ed. (Kuwait: Dar al-Salasil, 1427).

²⁰ Abu ‘Abdurrahmān Ahmad bin Syu’ayb Al-Nasā’iy, *Al-Sunan Al-Kubra* (Beirut: Muassasah al-Risalah, 2021).

²¹ Abulqasim‘Abdulkarim bin Muhammad Al-Rafi‘iy, *Al-‘Aziz Syarh Al-Wajiz*, 1st ed. (Libanon: Dar al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyah, 1997).

²² Sulaimān bin ‘Umar bin Manshūr Al-Jamal, *Hāsiyyah Al-Jamal*, (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1431).

Table 1. Analytical Dimensions of *Fidyah Semyang*:
Ritual Practice, Symbolism, Variations, and
Syncretism in Relation to Islamic Law

Aspect	Analytical Description
Practice Description	<i>Fidyah Semyang</i> is performed as a form of atonement for the missed prayers of a deceased individual, utilizing symbolic elements such as gold, money, and fragrance. The ritual is led by a spiritual figure (<i>wasi</i>), involving the rotation of a cloth containing gold and money, corresponding to the estimated number of prayers missed.
Symbols and Ritual Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Gold and money are wrapped in a white cloth and rotated by the <i>wasi</i>. - Fragrant substances are burned as a spiritual medium. - The ritual space is purified of paintings and photographs. - Intentions (<i>niyyah</i>) are recited symbolically by the <i>wasi</i>. - The number of rotations corresponds to either the actual or symbolic number of missed prayers (e.g., 42 rotations).
Variations in Practice	The ritual may be performed on the 7th, 40th, or 100th day after death, or even prior to burial.
Syncretic Dimension	<p>Islamic elements are integrated with Rejang cultural traditions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Gold symbolizes honour and nobility. - The rotation of ritual objects represents the symbolic “flow” or transmission of acts of worship. - Incense serves as a medium to invite the presence of the spirit. This reflects the adaptive process of Islam engaging with local spiritual customs.

When analyzed within the context of *Fidyah Semyang*, the practice clearly deviates from the provisions of *fiqh* across all major schools of Islamic jurisprudence, due to the following reasons:

1. The absence of a will (*wasiat*) from the deceased, which is a primary requirement for the validity of *fidyah*.
2. The medium used for *fidyah* is not staple food, as prescribed, but rather gold and cash, often determined symbolically rather than based on textual evidence (*nash*).
3. The ritualization of *fidyah* through symbolic processes such as the circulation of gold, the use of incense (*kemenyan*), and the recitation of intentions by a third party, none of which are found in the

teachings of the Shari'ah.

Thus, within the framework of Islamic law, *Fidyah Semyang* may be classified as ‘urf *fāsid*, a customary practice that contradicts established scriptural injunctions or has the potential to distort public understanding of Islamic worship. While ‘urf is recognized as a secondary source of Islamic law in the discipline of *uṣūl al-fiqh*, this recognition only holds when the custom does not conflict with definitive religious texts (*dalil qath’i*).²³ In this case, the local custom that permits substituting prayer with *fidyah* directly undermines the fundamental principle that acts of worship are inherently direct and individual obligations.

Regarding contemporary religious edicts, no fatwa has been issued by the Indonesian Council of Ulama (Majelis Ulama Indonesia, abbreviated as MUI) that explicitly permits *fidyah* to substitute the prayers of a deceased person, particularly not in the ritualized form known as *Fidyah Semyang*. In fact, various religious discourses and tafsir sessions conducted by contemporary scholars affiliated with both Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama consistently reject the notion of ritual substitution of a deceased person’s prayers with *fidyah*. Such a practice is deemed invalid and misleading, as it risks distorting the community’s understanding of the non-transferable and non-substitutable nature of prayer in Islam. Prayer is a direct obligation that cannot be fulfilled vicariously or compensated by another act.

Nevertheless, a spirit of *tasāmuḥ* (tolerance) has been adopted by some local

²³ Efrinaldi et al., “Urf Review Of The Practice Of Gold Marriage Mahar In The Community Of Tanjung Senang District Bandar Lampung,” *Al-Istinbath: Jurnal Hukum Islam* 7, no. 1 (2022): 287–310, <https://doi.org/10.29240/jhi.v7i1.4085>.

scholars, who interpret *Fidyah Semyang* not as a literal replacement for missed prayers, but rather as a symbolic act of supplication and charitable giving on behalf of the deceased. In this interpretive framework, *fidyah* is not understood through the lens of jurisprudence (*fiqh*), but rather through cultural and emotional expressions of *ta'zīyah* (consolation) and family spirituality. However, without adequate religious education, such symbolic interpretation is at risk of being misperceived as a legitimate legal practice within Islam, potentially compromising the purity and theological integrity of *'ibādah mahḍah* (pure acts of worship).

Therefore, it is essential to distinguish between cultural practices imbued with spiritual values and religious practices grounded in Sharia. *Fidyah Semyang* may be accepted as a form of religious-cultural expression, insofar as it is not positioned as a legitimate substitute for the deceased's missed prayers. However, if it is understood and practiced as an act of *qadha* worship or a means of expiating sins, such an interpretation requires critical reflection through an educational approach to prevent theological distortions within the community's religious understanding.

The findings of the study on the practice of *Fidyah Semyang* in Suka Datang Village bear significant implications, both in terms of theoretical discourse and the practical application of religious practices and Islamic legal policy development in Indonesia. Theoretically, this phenomenon reinforces the relevance of employing the concept of *'urf* (local customs or traditions) as one of the recognized sources of Islamic law, as upheld in the discipline of *usul al-fiqh*.²⁴ Nonetheless, as

emphasized by Islamic scholars, not all forms of *'urf* are admissible as legal foundations, only *'urf sahih* (customs that do not contradict revealed texts) may be taken into consideration in legal formulation.

In the case of *Fidyah Semyang*, the practice of offering gold or money as *fidyah* for missed prayers of the deceased, when there is no prior bequest and the ritual is framed within symbolic ceremonial expressions, falls under the category of *'urf fasid* (invalid custom), as it contradicts fundamental jurisprudential principles that prohibit the delegation or redemption of bodily acts of worship.

From the perspective of *living law*, the law that lives and evolves within society, this practice actually reveals that religious law at the grassroots level is often not applied in a purely formal-normative manner, but rather emerges as a blend of religious teachings and customary traditions. Within this framework, *Fidyah Semyang* can be understood as a form of social law "brought to life" by the community, as it is perceived to carry spiritual value, inner peace, and tangible social functions. The concept of *living law*, as developed by Eugen Ehrlich within the sociological tradition of law, emphasizes that the norms actively practiced by society may hold greater authority than codified statutes.²⁵ Hence, this study underscores the importance of bridging the normative approach of Islamic law with sociological and anthropological perspectives that regard law as the product of interaction with culture and social structures.

Dalam Islam," *El-Mashlahah* 10, no. 2 (2020): 14–25, <https://doi.org/10.23971/maslahah.v10i2.1911>.

²⁵ Rahmatullah, "Filsafat Hukum Sosiologis (Sociological Jurisprudence); Konsep Dan Aktualisasinya Dalam Hukum Indonesia."

²⁴ Darnela Putri, "Konsep 'Urf Sebagai Sumber Hukum

Conclusion

Based on the research findings, it can be concluded that the practice of *Fidyah Semyang* in Suka Datang Village represents a manifestation of religious syncretism, a convergence between Islamic teachings and deeply rooted local traditions within the community. This tradition is carried out as a form of spiritual responsibility by the family for deceased members who are believed to have neglected their obligatory prayers during their lifetime. Nevertheless, from the perspective of normative Islamic law, this practice remains controversial, as it pertains to *'ibādah badaniyyah*, bodily acts of worship, which, in principle, cannot be substituted or represented through monetary compensation such as *fidyah*.

The majority of Islamic scholars assert that prayer (*ṣalāh*) cannot be redeemed through material means, as it is a personal obligation that must be fulfilled directly by the individual. Therefore, despite its profound social and spiritual significance, the practice of *Fidyah Semyang* can be classified in *fiqh* as *'urf fāsid*, a customary practice that contradicts established scriptural norms. Moreover, this tradition has the potential to distort the public understanding of religious obligations in Islam if left unexamined. On the other hand, *Fidyah Semyang* also reflects the internal dynamics of a Muslim society continually negotiating its religious identity amid the enduring influence of indigenous customs and ancestral heritage. As such, this phenomenon offers a vivid illustration of the complex interplay between religion and culture within the context of localized Islam.

Credit Authorship Contribution

Elkhairati conceptualised the research design, established the theoretical foundation,

and drafted the introduction and conclusion. Laras Shesa and Yusefri developed the analytical framework, conducted the primary analysis, and refined the argumentation. Both authors contributed substantially to the writing process, reviewed the manuscript critically, and approved the final version for submission.

Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest and that no financial, institutional, or personal relationships influenced this research.

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to express their gratitude to Universitas Islam Negeri Sjech M. Djamil Djambek Bukittinggi and Institut Agama Islam Negeri Curup, Indonesia, for academic support and facilities that enabled the completion of this study. Special appreciation is also extended to colleagues and peer reviewers whose constructive insights enhanced the clarity and quality of this work.

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