

INTERPRETING THE MYTH OF MARRIAGE PROHIBITION IN PONGGOK VILLAGE, BLITAR: BETWEEN BELIEF, KNOWLEDGE, AND VALUES

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the myth of marriage prohibitions in Ponggok Village, Blitar Regency, as a form of living traditional knowledge that shapes social behavior. Using a qualitative case study approach, data were collected through in-depth interviews with a dukun manten as the key informant. The study aims to interpret these myths through ontological, epistemological, and axiological perspectives. The findings reveal seven types of prohibitions—ngalor ngulon, ngidul ngetan, weton geyeng, gothang, lusan desa, tumbuk desa, tunduk wuwung, and tunduk waton—which function as a normative framework in partner selection. Ontologically, these myths are socially constructed realities; epistemologically, they are transmitted intergenerationally; and axiologically, they contain moral and cultural values. Despite being perceived as irrational, these myths maintain social order and cultural identity. Therefore, contextual reinterpretation is needed to preserve their values while adapting to contemporary rationality and religious principles

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INTRODUCTION

Humans are flexible, uncertain, and incomplete creatures, or in the words of Malafouris (2021) always in the process of becoming. Humans are also closely intertwined with the flexibility of the forms they create—we call this "culture." The relationship between humans and culture is dialectical, mutually possessive, and mutually determining. Humans live and develop within their cultural environment to gain an understanding of ways of thinking and acting that have specific characteristics and functions, including the function of legitimacy. These ways of thinking and acting are the result of cultural conditioning acquired through education and learning from parents, teachers, and the surrounding environment, both directly and indirectly (Kusherdiana, 2020).

The existence of culture will continue due to the role of humans as the primary factor supporting and benefiting their lives. Every ethnic group has a culture, albeit with distinct characteristics. Despite these differences, each culture demonstrates basic similarities across tribes, races, and groups. Myth is one form of culture that persists even into the era of artificial intelligence.

The term myth frequently arises in various discussions, both among the general public and academics. Understanding the concept of myth itself is complex. Myths are often associated with stories of creation, which are usually imaginative. Nevertheless, these myths are believed in and subconsciously influence human thinking. It is evident that many groups' lifestyles are influenced by them. Myths can be considered symbols in the form of stories that have developed in society throughout history.

Myths are closely related to language, communication, and the construction of meaning and the messages they convey. They contain elements of belief that serve as guidelines for humans in living their lives. Ancient myths reflect the belief systems that developed in past societies and played a role in shaping culture. Although often viewed as a traditional and irrational legacy, myths remain widely believed and exert a significant influence on social behavior. Through myths, people are motivated to perform or avoid certain actions due to beliefs about the consequences that may arise if these norms are violated. The persistence of myths to this day demonstrates their important social and cultural function (Afifah dkk., 2018).

The function of myth as a form of traditional knowledge aligns with the metaphysical views of ancient societies, which were used to explain the realities of everyday life. Within this framework, everyday life is understood as a reflection of this metaphysical order. Belief in this concept then influences how individuals behave and act. Thus, myth functions like a symbol, ritual, or narrative that represents human awareness of their place in the cosmos, while simultaneously shaping their metaphysical attitudes and views (Mircea, 2002).

Myths and culture develop alongside the historical journey of a society itself. In Indonesia, myths are thought to have existed from the early arrival of Islam until around the end of the 19th century, marked by a religio-magical lifestyle. During that time, religious life, including doctrine, rituals, and ideology, was still influenced by myths. Myths, at that time, served as an effective strategy for strengthening religious belief. Religious life, filled with these myths, was often reflected in irrational religious practices, yet still served a rational function (Masroer, 2004).

Based on various studies conducted by researchers, Indonesians still believe in myths. Many traditions and rituals exist today in society, especially those based on myths. One myth that persists, particularly in Blitar Regency, concerns the prohibitions on marriage. The prohibitions on marriage in Javanese tradition are interesting to study further because they generate both pros and cons. In fact, these prohibitions are still strongly held by people who believe that violating them can lead to dire consequences.

Marriage in Islam only encourages consideration of wealth, lineage, beauty, and religion when choosing a partner. The criteria for choosing a partner are based not only on religious beliefs but also on ancestral teachings, which, although unwritten, are still believed to be true (Ismail, 2011). In general, in looking for a partner, people apply the principle of selectivity, prioritizing the *bebet*, *bibit*, and *bobot* of the prospective partner (Nuruddin, 2016). *Bebet* refers to family, origin, and lineage, while *bibit* refers to considerations regarding the origins of a family that is physically and mentally healthy. Freedom from mental illness is believed to produce healthy and good offspring.

The *bobot* factor refers to qualities that have value, such as dignity, power, wealth, social status, and sufficient knowledge to be respected by society. *Bobot* is not only related to social status or wealth, but also encompasses intellectual and spiritual wealth. These requirements, considered stringent, are still upheld by the majority of Javanese families to ensure the happiness of the prospective bride and groom as they build a household. Javanese custom does have prohibitions on marriage, but these prohibitions are more detailed and far beyond the limits of what is required by Islam or what is required by state regulations (Ririn, 2010).

A long-standing problem in Ponggok Village has drawn researchers' attention to explore myths related to marriage prohibitions. The cultural acculturation within this village community is very interesting to study further. Many prospective brides and grooms fail to marry due to the influence of these myths. Failing to marry due to these myths often leads to stress and depression. These prohibitions arise because culture and society are like two sides of the same coin, where adherence to a philosophy of life is a legacy inherited from ancestors that must be respected and passed down from generation to generation (Lukiti, 2008). This phenomenon is interesting to examine further, particularly in relation to the factors that led to the marriage ban in Ponggok Village, where the majority of the population is Muslim. They believe that violating this ban will bring harm to their families.

METHODOLOGY

This research employed a qualitative approach with a case study design to gain a deep and contextual understanding of the social practices and meanings inherent in the community. This approach was chosen because it captures the interconnectedness of myths, beliefs, and community behavior as a meaningful reality. Data were obtained through in-depth interviews with a traditional midwife in Ponggok Village, who served as a key informant and was considered to possess authoritative knowledge regarding marriage traditions and prohibitions. In qualitative research, the researcher serves as the primary instrument, supported by a structured interview guide to systematically gather information.

Data analysis was conducted using an interactive model that proceeded simultaneously and continuously until data saturation was reached. The analysis stages included data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion. This process was conducted inductively, starting from specific findings in the field and then formulating broader generalizations. The researcher selectively identified and focused on data relevant to marriage prohibitions as part of the community's belief system. The data was then presented in narrative form, charts, and relationships between categories to clarify the resulting meanings.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**Wedding**

Marriage is a form of implementation of the *sunnatullah* (lawful law) practiced by every creature of God. Furthermore, marriage is a part of the life process generally undertaken by every adult individual, uniting two people (a man and a woman) so they can live together as husband and wife through the wedding ceremony (Fendi & Sheila, 2019). The meaning of marriage is not merely the union of a man and a woman, but also a sacred bond of promise based on the name of Allah, reflecting the goal of building a harmonious, prosperous, happy, and loving family. Therefore, to achieve this goal, marriage must be based not only on the teachings of Islam as contained in the book of Allah and the Sunnah of the Prophet, but must also consider the regulations applicable in a country (Beni, 2011).

The laws in Indonesia are highly diverse, influenced by historical factors, such as the era of our ancestors, the establishment of the Islamic monarchy in Indonesia, the arrival of colonialists, and the era of independence. These various historical factors influence the formation of law in Indonesia. To this day, Indonesians still practice several sources of law, including religious law, customary law, and state law (marriage law and the Compilation of

Islamic Law) (Arifki, 2019). In accordance with the mandate of Law no. 1 of 1974 concerning marriage, the purpose of marriage is to form an eternal and prosperous family based on belief in the Almighty God (Santoso, 2016). Therefore, to achieve this goal, both men and women need to understand everything that supports and hinders the achievement of a harmonious family (Ayu, 2018). Marriages within a community are often influenced by local customs. According to Van Dijk, the meaning of marriage in customary law is closely linked to family relationships, social standing, and the individual within the community. This differs from the meaning of marriage in European society, where marriage is seen more as a matter of personal interest for the couple (Tholib, 2013).

The Myth of Marriage Prohibition in Ponggok Village, Blitar Regency

Based on interviews with informants, seven types of marriage prohibitions were discovered that are still believed as myths in Ponggok Village. These prohibitions include: First, ngalor ngulon, ngidul ngetan. This means that if the couple comes from different sub-districts, with their houses facing north (lorr) to west (kulon), marriage is prohibited. Furthermore, if the couple comes from different sub-districts, with their houses facing south (kidul) to east (etan), marriage is prohibited. This myth is based on King Brawijaya (King of Majapahit), who swore that his descendants would not marry in the ngalor ngulon, ngidul ngetan direction.

Second, weton geyeng. Javanese tradition is strongly influenced by the term weton. In Ponggok Village, it is believed that a person with a weton of Selasa (Tuesday) Wage cannot marry a person with a weton of Jumat (Friday) Pahing. Likewise, someone born on the weton Jumat (Friday) Wage cannot marry someone born on the weton Selasa (Tuesday) Pahing. This is based on the belief that the nature of people born on the Wage and Pahing days is like oil and water, and they cannot be combined. Tuesday has a value of 3, and Friday has a value of 6. These values do not exist in the market, so they are believed to be unmatched.

Third, gothang. This prohibition prohibits marriage to the firstborn child whose parent has died. This prohibition has no strong basis for support, but it is still believed by the people of Ponggok Village. Fourth, lusan deso. This myth prohibits marriage to someone who lives in the third village from their own. For example, the village order is Jagoan-Pulerejo-Ringin Branjang. Therefore, a Jagoan person cannot marry a Ringin Branjang person. This prohibition also has no strong basis for support, but it is still believed by the people of Ponggok Village.

Fifth, mbung deso. This myth prohibits marriage to someone from a village with the same village element. For example, a Karang Rejo resident cannot marry a Pule Rejo resident, as

their origins share the Rejo element. This prohibition lacks any solid basis, but it remains widely believed by the people of Ponggok Village.

Sixth, "unduk wuwung" (subject to wuwung). This myth prohibits marriage to someone whose house is in line with the house, specifically if the house is located south of the road. Seventh, a similar myth, "unduk waton" (subject to waton), prohibits marriage to someone whose house is in line with the house to the north or south of the road.

These seven marriage prohibitions are myths still believed by the people of Ponggok Village. Some prohibitions have a basis, but others are baseless. The baseless prohibitions are generally based on "ilmu titen" (the science of titen), or the same cause that always results in the same thing. If these prohibitions are violated, it is believed that the violator will experience bad luck. However, in Ponggok Village, religious knowledge still holds primary importance. So, if a couple is truly inseparable, they are considered destined to be together. However, if these prohibitions are violated, a ritual called "tolak balak" (repelling balak) must still be performed.

If the prohibitions from the first to fifth are violated, the repellent ritual involves diguang (a ritual offering) and sekar moncowarno (a ritual offering). The diguang requirement means that the wedding reception may only be held at the home of one of the bride and groom. For example, if a wedding reception is held for the bride, the groom is not permitted to hold any events. The groom's family is not permitted to attend the wedding, and the nemu tradition is performed during the wedding procession.

The requirement for the sekar moncowarno ceremony is that every year in the month of Suro, a genduri (gendering ceremony) must be held. During the genduri ceremony, sekar moncowarno is provided, an offering consisting of yellow rice, yellow coconut leaves (janur kuning), andong leaves, croton leaves, and jambe flowers. Each ornament in the offering has its own meaning. The yellow rice signifies restoration of purity, the yellow coconut leaves (janur kuning) signifies light, the andong leaves signify prayer, and the jambe leaves signify blossoming. The month of Suro, chosen for the genduri ceremony, also has significance. It is considered a good month for self-improvement.

If the prohibitions in the sixth and seventh points are violated, the requirement is a ruwatan (traditional ritual). Ruwatan is a procession performed through a wayang (wayang) performance. The puppeteer (puppeteer) is not chosen at random. There are puppeteers specifically trusted to perform the ruwatan ritual. These prohibitions are implemented to uphold the values and identity of the Ponggok Village community. The system of stories and beliefs

formed within the community through myths aims to maintain and emphasize its identity (Rokhmansyah, 2014). Values are a comprehensive picture of what is expected, what is appropriate, useful, and what is able to control the social behavior of a person who is beneficial. Values are a comprehensive picture of what is desired, considered appropriate, useful, and has the power to influence the social behavior of a beneficial person. (Puji, 2010).

According to customary law, marriage is more than just a special moment for the couple, as it is believed to be an event witnessed by the ancestors of both parties. From a customary legal perspective, marriage is not just a bond between a man and a woman, but also encompasses the relationship between the man's and the woman's families, and even within the broader community. The bonds formed through marriage are governed and respected by the rules that apply within that community (Purwadi, 2005).

Therefore, the meaning of marriage is very important, especially for Javanese indigenous people. When choosing a life partner, they prioritize clarity regarding their family background, family lineage, and family weight. Furthermore, there are Javanese calculations that must be adhered to, to achieve a lasting, prosperous marriage, good economic stability, and produce the desired offspring (Artati, 2001). This myth is believed because it has been passed down through generations by ancestors. Furthermore, this myth is also conveyed by a traditional healer (dukun manten), whom the community considers an expert on marriage, including all prohibitions. Myths are not conveyed through the objects in their messages, but through how the message is conveyed (Rafiek, 2012).

Ontological Perspective in the Myth of Marriage Prohibition in Ponggok Village

The ontological aspect of the myth of the prohibition of marriage relates to a deep understanding of the nature, meaning, and existence of the myth as a cultural phenomenon experienced by society. Mahfud (2018) stated that ontology is a part of philosophy that discusses the nature of the existence of everything that exists and may exist. The goal of ontology is to uncover the essence of every reality. Philosophers strive to explain all forms of reality in their manifestations through their formulations (Mufid, 2013). From an ontological aspect, the myth of the prohibition of marriage in Ponggok Village is a story believed and adhered to by the community. This myth is used as a basis or guideline when people want to do something, especially regarding choosing a partner. Once something is believed, there is no need to question the scientific reasons for how it can happen.

Axiological Perspective on the Myth of Marriage Prohibition in Ponggok Village

The axiological aspect of the myth of the prohibition of marriage in Ponggok Village relates to the moral values and meanings contained within it, which play a vital role in the social and spiritual life of the community. Axiology can also be interpreted as a theory of values related to the usefulness of acquired knowledge. Axiology plays a crucial role in the process of developing knowledge because when a branch of knowledge lacks axiological values, it tends to bring harm to human life and even threatens social life and the balance of nature. (Juhari, 2019).

The myth of marriage prohibitions encourages people to be more careful in choosing partners. Furthermore, the requirement to ward off disaster by making "genduri" (a ritual offering made of rice) strengthens the community's sense of gratitude and teaches them to give alms. The requirement to perform the ritual during the month of Suro, the Islamic New Year, also increases the community's religiosity. Although people believe in myths, their primary belief remains in God.

Epistemological Perspective on the Myth of Marriage Prohibitions in Ponggok Village

Epistemology stems from the philosophical discipline of studying the foundations and limits of knowledge. Epistemology, within the philosophy of science, aims to explain how knowledge is acquired, how truth is measured, and how the limits of that knowledge are understood (Bahm, 1995). Epistemology provides a methodological foundation for the development of science and a guide for testing the validity of scientific theories.

The epistemological aspect of the myth of marriage prohibitions in Ponggok Village encompasses the community's understanding of what is permissible and unacceptable in choosing a partner. Knowledge of the myth has been passed down from their ancestors and validated by local wedding shamans. Belief in the myth remains strong because it is actually true in practice. Knowledge about warding off disaster is also passed down by local families and is accompanied by wedding shamans in their practices.

CONCLUSION

This research shows that the myths about marriage prohibitions in Ponggok Village, Blitar Regency, are an integral part of a traditional knowledge system that is still alive and functioning in the community. Seven forms of prohibitions exist: ngalor ngulon, ngidul ngetan, weton

geyeng, gothang, lusan desa, mbung desa, memberik wuwung, and memberik waton, which collectively form a normative framework for choosing a life partner.

Ontologically, these myths are understood as realities believed to exist and used as guidelines in social practices, particularly in the process of choosing a partner. Epistemologically, knowledge of these myths is passed down from generation to generation and reinforced by cultural authorities such as traditional healers, so they remain valid even though they do not always have a rational, empirical basis. Meanwhile, axiologically, these myths contain social and spiritual values, such as caution in choosing a partner, respect for ancestral traditions, and strengthening religious practices through rituals to ward off disaster.

Although myths are often perceived as irrational, in the context of the Ponggok community, they have a real social function as a maintainer of social stability, strengthening cultural identity, and providing a sense of psychological security for the community. Without negating rationality and religious teachings, myths need to be critically reread through a contextual-dialogical approach, so that ethical, symbolic, and cohesive values can be maintained, while elements that have the potential to limit individual choices or conflict with religious principles can be adaptively transformed according to the dynamics of society.

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