

Negotiating Custom and Sharia: Nahdlatul Ulama's 'Urf and Islamic Educational Values in the Traditions of Metes Village, Sidorejo Subdistrict, Salatiga City

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Abstract

This study responds to the renewed interest in local cultures in Indonesia, which may function as social cohesion and a vehicle for value transmission, yet may also be reduced to empty ceremonialism amid modernization and the politicization of identity. The customary practices of Metes Village (Sidorejo Subdistrict, Salatiga City) are analytically significant because they remain vibrant, socially binding, and institutionalized through the authority of customary custodians (locally known as *jenang kutei/jenang kutai*) and the operation of customary sanctions in rituals such as *cuci kampung* (village cleansing) and communal feasts (*umbungan/hajatan*), including *walimah*, *aqiqah*, and circumcision (*khitan*). The study addresses two questions: (1) how Metes customary norms operate as a form of social governance within a plural community, and (2) how Islamic law evaluates these customs as a medium for internalizing Islamic educational values worship (*ibadah*), creed (*aqidah*), and morality (*akhlak*). Employing a qualitative socio-legal (empirical–normative) design, the research integrates library study, documentation, and field-based accounts of relevant customary practices. Data were analyzed thematically by (i) mapping Islamic educational values (worship, creed, morality) embedded in the rituals and (ii) assessing their legal standing using widely recognized criteria for the acceptance of 'urf: social acceptability, continuity, binding force, non-contradiction with scriptural sources (*nass*), and orientation toward public benefit (*maslahah*). The findings show that Metes customs function as a living social institution that sustains order and solidarity through community consensus and the mandate of customary custodians, while simultaneously operating as a socio-religious educational space through closing prayers, the recitation of *al-Barzanji*, reinforcement of social ethics, and the absence of practices associated with polytheism (e.g., offerings or burning incense). Accordingly, these customs may be recognized as valid 'urf (*'urf sahib*) insofar as they remain within the boundaries of Islamic law and serve public welfare. The study recommends strengthening intergenerational transmission of customary knowledge, standardizing ritual procedures in alignment with Islamic teachings, and redesigning customary sanctions to be proportional and educational, thereby ensuring that customs continue to cultivate socio-religious literacy and character formation without producing social harm.

Keywords: Customary Practices; 'Urf; Islamic Education; Walimah; Aqiqah; Circumcision (*Khitan*); Metes; Salatiga.

Abstrak

Penelitian ini berangkat dari meningkatnya perhatian pada budaya lokal di Indonesia yang, di satu sisi, berfungsi sebagai perekat sosial dan media pewarisan nilai, tetapi di sisi lain rentan tereduksi menjadi seremonial tanpa makna ketika berhadapan dengan modernisasi dan politisasi identitas; dalam konteks itu, adat istiadat Desa Metes (Kecamatan Sidorejo, Kota Salatiga) menarik dikaji karena tetap hidup, mengikat, dan dilembagakan melalui peran pemangku adat (*jenang kutei/jenang kutai*) serta mekanisme sanksi adat dalam praktik cuci

kampung dan prosesi umbungan/hajatan (walimah, aqiqah, khitan). Penelitian ini merumuskan dua masalah: (1) bagaimana konfigurasi adat Metes bekerja sebagai tata kelola sosial dalam komunitas plural, dan (2) bagaimana tinjauan hukum Islam menilai adat tersebut sebagai medium internalisasi nilai-nilai pendidikan Islam (ibadah, aqidah, akhlak). Metode yang digunakan adalah kualitatif dengan desain sosio-legal (empiris normatif), melalui studi kepustakaan, dokumentasi, dan penggalian data lapangan atas praktik adat yang relevan; data dianalisis tematik dengan kategorisasi nilai pendidikan Islam (ibadah, aqidah, akhlak) serta uji kesesuaian adat menggunakan kriteria penerimaan ‘urf (keberterimaan sosial, kontinuitas, daya ikat, tidak bertentangan dengan nash, dan bermuatan kemaslahatan). Hasil penelitian menyimpulkan bahwa adat Metes berfungsi sebagai institusi sosial yang menjaga keteraturan dan solidaritas warga melalui mandat pemangku adat dan kesepakatan komunitas, sekaligus menjadi ruang pendidikan sosial-keagamaan melalui doa penutup, pembacaan al-Barzanji, penguatan etika sosial, dan tidak ditemukannya unsur yang mengarah pada kemusyrikan (misalnya sesajen/kemenyan), sehingga secara prinsip dapat diterima sebagai ‘urf sah sepanjang menjaga batas syariat dan kemaslahatan. Rekomendasi penelitian menekankan penguatan transmisi pengetahuan adat pada generasi muda, standardisasi prosesi yang selaras dengan ajaran Islam, serta penataan mekanisme sanksi adat agar proporsional dan edukatif sehingga fungsi adat sebagai literasi sosial-keagamaan dan pembentuk karakter warga tetap terjaga tanpa menimbulkan mudarat sosial.

Kata kunci: Adat Istiadat; ‘Urf; Pendidikan Islam; Walimah; Aqiqah; Khitan; Metes; Salatiga

Introduction

In recent years, attention to local culture often framed as customary practice (*adat istiadat*) has increased in Indonesia, yet this development unfolds within an ambivalent socio-political context. On the one hand, *adat* can function as a binder of social cohesion and a marker of collective identity; on the other hand, identity categories such as race, ethnicity, religion, and *adat* are frequently drawn into arenas of political contestation, risking a shift from culture as a source of integration to culture as a driver of fragmentation. This condition calls for a clearer academic reading, so that diversity is not positioned as an instrument of polarization but rather as socio-cultural capital that strengthens social unity. (Yunus, 2016)

Theoretically, culture may be understood as patterned meanings woven through symbols and social practices that are transmitted across generations, enabling people to communicate, preserve knowledge, and develop orientations toward their social reality. In this sense, *adat* is not merely a historical remnant but an ongoing practice continuously reproduced and shaping a community’s value orientations over time. Within this framework, the preservation of local culture is relevant as a strategy for forming collective character, especially when the values it contains are consciously articulated and transmitted through everyday social education. (Yunus, 2016)

At the same time, many customary practices across Indonesian communities carry moral messages transmitted intergenerationally and frequently operate as mechanisms of informal education beyond formal schooling. Such values potentially resonate with the aims of Islamic education: forming knowledgeable persons of good character who draw closer to God through habituated worship, strengthened creed, and the cultivation of *akblaq al-karimah* across family, school, and society. However, the literature on Islamic education often treats “society” as a general learning context without closely examining how customary rituals concretely function as spaces for the internalization of Islamic values in everyday communal life. (Muhaimin, 2006; Ulwan, 1999)

A similar gap appears in value-education studies that distinguish *values of being* (inner moral qualities) and *values of giving* (relational/prosocial virtues) to explain how personal traits such as honesty, discipline, propriety, and knowing one's limits materialize into social behaviors shaping inter-citizen relations. This framework helps interpret *adat* not merely as ceremony but as a site where social character is produced and reproduced. Yet many value-education studies have not integrated such character dimensions with normative-religious evaluation: whether the social mechanisms generated by *adat* align with the value orientation of Islamic education or contain problematic elements. (Elmubarak, 2008)

From the perspective of Islamic law, the concept of *'urf* provides an analytical instrument for evaluating *adat* as a legal consideration insofar as it meets key criteria: rationality and social acceptance, general applicability and continuity, social binding force, and non-contradiction with the Qur'an and Sunnah. This framework is crucial to ensure that local cultural practices remain within the bounds of the Sharia while opening interpretive space for recognizing *adat* as an instrument of public benefit when aligned with Islamic principles. However, studies on *'urf* often stop at a binary “permissible/impermissible” assessment without developing an interdisciplinary reading of *adat's* educational function such as how customary rules, the mandate of customary custodians, and social sanctions operate as mechanisms of learning, value internalization, and the reinforcement of communal order. (Basyir, 1993)

Metes Village (Sidorejo Subdistrict, Salatiga City) exemplifies this dynamic. Its population is plural and continuously evolving, yet customary practices remain highly respected and institutionalized through the mandate of customary custodians (*jenang kutei/jenang kuta*), accompanied by internal regulation and customary sanctions to ensure that communal feasts particularly *walimah*, *aqiqah*, and *kbitan*—proceed according to communal

consensus. This distinctiveness makes Metes analytically relevant: *adat* appears to function as binding social governance and, simultaneously, as a space for internalizing Islamic educational values through concrete practices (prayer, religious habituation, social ethics, and collective cooperation). Accordingly, this study focuses on how Metes customs are operationalized as binding cultural practices and how Islamic law evaluates them, particularly regarding the presence of Islamic educational values worship, creed, and morality in *walimah*, *aqiqah*, and *khitan* rituals. (Yunus, 2016; Basyir, 1993; Muhaimin, 2006)

Research Method

This study adopts a qualitative approach with a socio-legal (empirical–normative) design. Empirically, it examines *adat* as a living social practice, focusing on communal feasts (*umbungan/hajatan*) *walimah*, *aqiqah*, and *khitan* and the role of customary custodians (*jenang kutei/jenang kutai*), who are mandated by host families to oversee pre- and post-event stages. Normatively, it evaluates these customs using the framework of *‘urf* acceptance in Islamic law and indicators of Islamic educational values. (Muhaimin, 2006; Basyir, 1993) Data collection involved: (1) library research to consolidate conceptual foundations on Islamic educational values and *adat* as a legal consideration; (2) documentation of existing customary procedures and rules; and (3) field-based elicitation of accounts concerning relevant customary practices (including *walimah*, *aqiqah*, *khitan*, and the role of customary custodians). Data were analyzed thematically through: data reduction (classifying customary practices), categorization of Islamic educational values (worship, creed, morality and social values), and compatibility testing against the criteria for valid *‘urf*. (Muhaimin, 2006; Elmubarak, 2008; Basyir, 1993)

The ‘Urf Paradigm

The theoretical framework of this article positions *‘urf* (customary practice/habit) as the key instrument for examining the relationship between local tradition and Sharia norms. In *usul al-fiqh*, *‘urf* refers to socially recognized and accepted practices that shape recurrent patterns of collective action and are regarded as normal within a community. Because it is embedded in social life, *‘urf* is not merely cultural expression but a “social fact” capable of acquiring normative force in communal relations. This perspective enables a proportional assessment of *adat*: it is not automatically rejected for being local tradition, but tested based on social validity, compatibility with Islamic principles, and orientation to public welfare

(*maslahah*). (Basyir, 1993; Shabana, 2010; Kamali, 2003; Khallaf, 1983; Haroen, 2001; Syarifuddin, 1999)

In Islamic legal theory, *'urf* may function as a supporting legal consideration in contexts where *ijtihad* is possible particularly in *mu'amalat* and social governance. It does not replace *nass*; rather, it helps ensure that legal determinations remain applicable to communal realities while staying within the bounds of the Sharia. This is consistent with the idea that legal responses to social context may vary in *ijtihadi* domains (as opposed to fixed matters of creed and definitive texts), making *'urf* an important tool for identifying productive acculturation and filtering problematic practices. (Basyir, 1993; al-Zarqa, 1968; al-Zuhayli, 1978; Kamali, 2003; Shabana, 2010; Ibn al-Qayyim, 1996)

The acceptance criteria for *'urf* employed in this article follow standard *usul al-fiqh* parameters: the practice must be rational and socially acceptable, general and continuous, and truly “alive” in everyday communal life. It must also be socially binding, producing real consequences such as public compliance with customary procedures, recognition of customary authority, and the existence of social/customary sanctions. These criteria distinguish incidental habits from institutionalized custom: practices that have transformed into stable communal norms. (Basyir, 1993; Khallaf, 1983; Abu Zahrah, n.d.; Haroen, 2001; al-Zarqa, 1968; Yamamah, 2016)

The most fundamental requirement is non-contradiction with the Qur'an and Sunnah, especially regarding creed (*'aqidah*) and worship (*'ibadah*). Custom is acceptable only insofar as it does not contain practices leading to *shirk*, normalize beliefs/rituals that violate *tawhid*, or legitimize prohibited actions. The recognition of custom is often captured by the legal maxim *al-'adah muhakkamah* (custom is legally authoritative) with a clear boundary: it operates only where it does not conflict with Sharia evidence. This framework enables the rituals of Metes including prayers, symbols, and sequences to be tested as either reinforcing Islamic orientation (e.g., supplication, *al-Barzanji*, religious gatherings) or containing problematic elements. (Basyir, 1993; al-Zuhayli, 1978; Kamali, 2003; Haroen, 2001; Yamamah, 2016; Harika et al., 2025)

Beyond compliance with *nass*, the *'urf* framework emphasizes social benefit (*maslahah*). Accepted custom should not merely be “not prohibited,” but should also generate benefits: strengthening solidarity, maintaining order, promoting deliberation (*musyawarah*), mutual assistance (*gotong royong*), and regulating inter-citizen relations. Thus, internal regulations and customary sanctions may be read as mechanisms that reinforce communal

order, provided they are just, proportional, and do not violate Sharia principles. Within a *maqasid/ maslahah* lens, custom that aligns with social benefit and does not contravene the law can be understood as part of how the Sharia preserves life's order *hifẓ al-din, al-nafs, al-'aql, al-nasl*, and *al-mal* at the level of lived community practice. (Basyir, 1993; al-Ghazali, 1983; al-Zarqa, 1968; Kamali, 2003; Shabana, 2010; Ibn al-Qayyim, 1996)

Discussion

Metes Custom as Social Governance in a Plural Community

Plurality in Metes does not erode customary authority; rather, *adat* continues to function as a respected social guideline that maintains communal order. Practices such as *cuci kampong* and ritual procedures in communal feasts (*walimah, aqiqah, and khitan*) are preserved as elements of local identity and as mechanisms of social solidarity. The persistence of these customs indicates that local culture operates as a transmitted pattern of meaning and a practical “life-design” guiding communal orientation. (Yunus, 2016)

A distinct feature of Metes is the presence of internal regulation including customary sanctions—when rituals are not carried out according to agreements established by customary custodians. This signals that *adat* functions as binding “social regulation,” not merely cultural expression. From a social-education perspective, such binding mechanisms can transmit discipline, norm compliance, and respect for communal authority as components of character formation. (Elmubarok, 2008)

The role of *jenang kutei/jenang kutai* as customary custodians constitutes a central node in governing ritual order. During *umbungan/hajatan*, they are mandated by host families to oversee pre- and post-event stages, helping ensure orderly implementation and minimizing conflict. Socio-religiously, this role cultivates deliberation, coordination, and collective responsibility conditions that support communal harmony. (Muhaimin, 2006)

Walimah, Aqiqah, and Khitan as Spaces for Internalizing Islamic Educational Values

In *walimah, aqiqah, and khitan*, Metes custom functions as a socio-religious educational space rather than a mere sequence of ceremonial acts. Communal feasts become social settings in which religious values are practiced, witnessed, and transmitted collectively. In Islamic education, society alongside family and school is a major locus of religiosity formation because it produces norms, habits, and exemplars through shared practice. Thus, Metes feasts can be read as community-based education integrating worship (relation to

God) and social ethics (relations among people) within a concrete public event. (Muhaimin, 2006; Ulwan, 1999)

1. Walimah. A prominent practice is the closing of the event with Islamic supplication, accompanied by a strengthened religious atmosphere through the recitation of *al-Barzanji* during the gathering. These elements indicate that the feast is not understood as social celebration alone but as a “sacralized” moment reoriented toward God through prayer and *shalawat*. From the standpoint of value internalization, such repeated recitations and communal prayers operate as habituation: community members repeatedly experience that major social events should be framed by remembrance of God and religious etiquette. This reflects productive acculturation: custom provides social togetherness, while Islam supplies the normative frame that directs meaning and purpose. (Ulwan, 1999; Muhaimin, 2006)
2. Aqiqah. Metes practice illustrates how tradition may reinforce Islamic educational values in worship and family responsibility. *Aqiqah* is essentially an expression of gratitude for a child's birth and an affirmation of parental responsibility for early religious upbringing; when performed as a communal feast, its value expands through the presence of a social network that witnesses, prays, and morally supports the family. This strengthens the social dimension of worship: religious ritual is not only private devotion but also a means of building communal moral support for families and newborns. Such support is significant for sustaining a consistent religious environment and facilitating intergenerational value transmission. (Ulwan, 1999; Muhaimin, 2006)
3. Khitan. Here, custom operates as a medium for instilling religious discipline and social ethics. While circumcision has a jurisprudential dimension related to cleanliness and *fitrah*, its communal celebration signifies social recognition of a child's transition toward a new stage of maturity. In internalization terms, this recognition creates a learning experience: children and families not only fulfil a religious obligation but also learn etiquette, propriety, and social responsibility in a public setting. This aligns with the view that value education must go beyond normative knowledge and be embodied as social experience shaping habits and character. (Muhaimin, 2006; Elmubarak, 2008)

From the standpoint of creed (*'aqidah*), the absence of polytheistic elements—such as offerings or burning incense—constitutes a crucial indicator that Metes custom remains within Sharia boundaries at the minimum threshold of *tawhid*. Although *'aqidah* messages may not be explicitly verbalized in every ritual, the absence of contradictory practices suggests a subtle process of cultural selection: potentially problematic elements are abandoned, while compatible ones (prayers, *shalawat*, religious gatherings) are maintained. Within an *'urf* framework, custom is acceptable insofar as it does not conflict with *nass*, is socially recognized, and is oriented toward *maslahah*. In this sense, Metes custom appears to function as a neutral-to-positive social context that supports piety rather than competing with Islamic teaching. (Basyir, 1993)

Moral and social values are particularly dominant in these feasts: mutual reminders regarding customary obligations, cooperation to prevent conflict, respect for community leadership, deliberation, mutual assistance, and strengthening social ties (*silaturahmi*). Pedagogically, these practices constitute character learning through *learning by doing*: community members are habituated to attend, help, share roles, comply with agreements, and maintain harmony. Value-education theory explains character formation through a combination of personal qualities (*values of being* such as discipline and knowing limits) and relational virtues (*values of giving* such as care, cooperation, and respect). Metes custom provides a social arena where both dimensions are practiced simultaneously. Hence, *walimah*, *aqiqah*, and *khitan* are not merely “traditions” but an informal educational ecosystem integrating worship–creed–morality in communal life. (Muhaimin, 2006; Elmubarak, 2008)

Analysis of Metes Custom as a Living Institution: Social Governance and the Production of Communal Norms

Metes custom should be read not as cultural performance alone but as a living institution functioning as social governance within a plural community. This is indicated by the continuity of practices (*cuci kampung*, *umbungan/hajatan*) and the existence of customary authority (*jenang kutei/jenang kutai*) who oversee pre- and post-event stages to ensure order and minimize friction. In cultural analysis, such transmitted symbols and practices operate as patterns of meaning that orient communal life and maintain cohesion serving as socio-cultural capital for integration rather than mere heritage. (Yunus, 2016; Geertz, 1973)

The binding force of Metes custom is reinforced through internal regulation and sanctions when rituals deviate from customary agreement. In *'urf* theory, this matters because

it differentiates incidental habits from stable social norms: *'urf* requires social acceptance, repetition (general and continuous), and communal recognition that the practice is binding and consequential. The mandate of customary custodians and the sanction mechanism thus indicate that Metes custom meets the criteria of living *'urf* operating as a tool of social regulation within *mu'amalat* and communal governance. (Basyir, 1993; al-Zarqa, 1968; Khallaf, 1983)

From the perspective of value education, such binding structure is not merely control but a social learning engine shaping communal habitus: collective discipline, compliance with agreement, respect for community leadership, and deliberative skills. Custom becomes a *learning by doing* space where residents learn to manage relationships, avoid conflict, and build social responsibility through repeated cooperative practices. The *values of being/values of giving* framework helps explain how personal virtues (discipline, propriety) are translated into relational virtues (cooperation, care, respect), demonstrating that Metes custom functions as a site for producing social character intertwined with Islamic ethics. (Elmubarak, 2008; Muhaimin, 2006)

Islamic Legal Analysis of Metes Custom: Valid 'Urf and the Internalization of Islamic Educational Values

In *walimah*, *aqiqah*, and *khitman*, Metes custom demonstrates productive acculturation: custom provides communal togetherness while Islam supplies the normative frame directing the meaning of rituals. Closing prayers and the recitation of *al-Barzanji* indicate that feasts are not merely social entertainment but are “sacralized” through *dhikr/shalawat* and religious etiquette. In Islamic education theory, society functions as a core educational center through exemplarity and habituation; therefore, repeated communal prayer and *shalawat* become concrete mechanisms for internalizing worship in public space. (Muhaimin, 2006; Ulwan, 1999)

The decisive test in *'urf* theory is conformity with *nass*, particularly regarding creed. The finding that Metes rituals do not include practices associated with *shirk* (e.g., offerings, burning incense) strengthens the classification of Metes custom as valid *'urf* (*'urf sahib*), since the minimal condition for accepting *'urf* is non-contradiction with the Qur'an and Sunnah. This reflects subtle cultural filtering: potentially problematic elements are abandoned, while compatible ones (prayer, religious gatherings, *shalawat*) are retained and become markers of religious identity. This is consistent with the principle that *'urf* supports legal reasoning in

ijtihadi/mu'amalat domains without displacing *nass*, enabling contextual application of Sharia within the boundaries of *tawhid*. (Basyir, 1993; al-Zuhayli, 1978; Kamali, 2003)

Finally, the acceptance of *'urf* must also be tested against *maslahah*. The prominent social-ethical values deliberation, mutual assistance, *silaturrahim*, respect for leadership, and cooperation to avoid conflict signal strong social benefits consistent with Islamic educational aims (the cultivation of *akhlak al-karimah*). Within a *maslahah/maqasid* lens, customs that strengthen social order and solidarity may be considered supportive of communal welfare, provided customary sanctions are implemented justly, proportionally, and without harming vulnerable groups. Islamic law's position toward Metes custom is therefore best described as conditional-affirmative: it may be accepted as an educational and beneficial *'urf*, while requiring ongoing evaluation so that it does not drift into social burden, commodification of feasts, or coercive pressures exceeding residents' capacity. (al-Ghazali, 1983; Ibn al-Qayyim, 1996; Muhaimin, 2006)

Conclusion

This article advances two conclusions. First, Metes customary practice functions as a living institution of social governance within a plural community. Through the mandate of customary custodians (*jenang kutei/jenang kantai*), community consensus, and the operation of customary sanctions, rituals such as *cuci kampung* and communal feasts (*umbungan/hajatan walimah, aqiqah, and khitan*) produce compliance, procedural order, and strengthened solidarity and social integration. In this sense, *adat* is not merely symbolic; it actively produces communal norms and collective character through deliberation, mutual assistance, respect for customary authority, and conflict prevention. Second, from an Islamic legal perspective, Metes custom may be evaluated as acceptable *'urf* insofar as it meets criteria of social acceptance (general, continuous, and binding) and does not contradict the Qur'an and Sunnah. The findings indicate a constructive acculturation with Islamic educational values through closing prayers, the recitation of *al-Barzanji*, and the reinforcement of religious etiquette in *walimah, aqiqah, and khitan*, alongside the absence of practices associated with *shirk* such as offerings or incense burning. Accordingly, Metes custom may be categorized as valid and beneficial *'urf* (*'urf sahib/maslahah*): it supports habituated worship, safeguards creed, and strengthens social morality as a medium of community-based Islamic education. Practically, sustaining this synergy between custom and Sharia requires strengthening intergenerational transmission of customary knowledge, clarifying the educational meaning

of rituals to prevent empty routinization, and recalibrating customary sanctions to remain proportional and non-harmful. Under these conditions, Metes custom can continue to thrive as socio-religious literacy and character formation aligned with 'urf principles and public welfare.

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