



THE TRADITION OF “UANG HANTARAN” IN RIAU MALAY MARRIAGE: AN ‘URF-BASED AND MAQĀṢID AL-SHARĪ‘AH ANALYSIS

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Abstract

This study examines the tradition of *uang hantaran* in Riau Malay marriages from the perspective of Islamic law, addressing the limited analytical discussion on its legal status and socio-religious implications. Using a qualitative ethnographic approach, data were collected through fieldwork in Siak Regency, Pekanbaru City, and Dumai City, involving interviews with community members and religious figures. The findings show that *uang hantaran* is a deeply rooted customary practice determined through mutual agreement, functioning as both financial support for wedding expenses and a symbol of commitment. However, excessive demands may generate

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financial burdens, indebtedness, and delays in marriage. From the standpoint of Islamic jurisprudence, although not prescribed in the Qur'an or Sunnah, the practice may be accommodated under the concept of *'urf* (custom) as long as it aligns with Islamic principles—permissible when it promotes *maṣlaḥah* and invalid when it leads to *mafsadah*. This study contributes by offering an integrative *'urf*-based analysis that bridges local cultural practices with Islamic legal theory, providing a more nuanced framework for evaluating customary marriage traditions in contemporary Muslim societies.

Keywords: Uang hantaran; Riau Malay tradition; Islamic law; *'urf*; marriage customs.

A. Introduction

The Riau Malay community strongly preserves its customs and traditions, particularly in the institution of marriage, which is embedded with cultural values and symbolic meanings. The customary marriage process often begins with *merisik* (preliminary inquiry), followed by stages that reflect local wisdom and social norms (Sayuti & Turnip, 2023). Although these practices are deeply rooted in Malay culture, they are not explicitly regulated in Islamic legal sources, raising questions regarding their compatibility with Islamic teachings (Idawati et al., 2024). This tension highlights the need for a proper framework of Islamic legal reasoning (*istinbāt al-ḥukm*), in which the concept of *'urf* (custom) becomes relevant in assessing the legitimacy of local traditions (Purnama, 2021).

Among the prominent traditions in Riau Malay marriage is *uang hantaran*, a sum of money provided by the groom to the bride's family prior to the wedding ceremony (Ardiansyah & Masrokhin, 2023). Functionally, *uang hantaran* serves as financial assistance for wedding expenses and symbolizes the groom's responsibility and commitment. However, unlike *mahr* (dowry), which is a mandatory element in Islamic marriage, *uang hantaran* is a customary practice without fixed legal provisions (Saiin, Umar, et al., 2023). In practice, the amount is often determined through negotiation between families, yet in many cases, it is set unilaterally by the bride's side, potentially creating

financial burdens for the groom (Miftah & Putra, 2023).

Previous studies have generally described *uang hantaran* as a cultural tradition and acknowledged its social functions (Kamal et al., 2021), but they tend to remain descriptive and have not sufficiently examined its legal status within Islamic jurisprudence using a systematic analytical framework (Saiin, Karuok, et al., 2023). Moreover, limited attention has been given to the dual nature of the practice its potential to generate both *maṣlaḥah* (benefit) and *mafsadah* (harm) particularly in contemporary socio-economic contexts (Mustafid et al., 2024). This indicates a research gap in integrating empirical findings with Islamic legal theory, especially through the lens of *'urf* as a dynamic source of law (Masputri, 2019).

Based on this gap, this study addresses the following research questions: (1) How is the practice of *uang hantaran* implemented in Riau Malay marriages? (2) What are its social and economic impacts on the community? (3) How is the practice positioned within the framework of Islamic law, particularly through the concept of *'urf*? Accordingly, the objectives of this study are to analyze the practice of *uang hantaran*, to examine its implications, and to evaluate its legal status within Islamic jurisprudence.

This study contributes to the existing literature by offering an integrative analysis that bridges local cultural practices with Islamic legal theory (Husin et al., 2022). It provides a more nuanced understanding of how *'urf* operates in evaluating customary traditions, particularly in distinguishing between acceptable (*'urf ṣaḥīḥ*) and invalid (*'urf fāsid*) practices. Practically, the study also offers insights for communities and policymakers in harmonizing cultural traditions with Islamic principles to ensure that marriage remains accessible and aligned with its religious objectives.

This study employs a qualitative approach with an ethnographic design to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the *uang hantaran* tradition within the Riau Malay community. The research was conducted in three locations Siak Regency, Pekanbaru City, and Dumai City which were selected purposively due to their strong

representation of Malay cultural practices and the continued prevalence of *uang hantaran* in marriage traditions. These sites provide diverse socio-cultural contexts, enabling a richer and more nuanced exploration of the phenomenon.

The subjects of this study consist of community members, traditional leaders, religious figures, and individuals directly involved in marriage practices. Informants were selected using purposive and snowball sampling techniques, ensuring that participants possessed relevant knowledge and experience related to *uang hantaran*. A total of approximately 15–20 informants were involved, including prospective brides and grooms, parents, customary leaders (*tokoh adat*), and Islamic scholars. This selection allowed for the inclusion of multiple perspectives, both normative and experiential.

Data were collected through several techniques to ensure depth and richness. First, in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore participants' views, experiences, and interpretations of *uang hantaran*. Second, participant observation was carried out during marriage-related activities to capture actual practices and social interactions. Third, document analysis was employed to examine relevant literature, customary regulations, and previous studies. These methods enabled the researcher to triangulate data sources and gain a holistic understanding of the tradition.

Data analysis was conducted using a thematic analysis approach. The process began with data reduction through transcription and organization of field data, followed by open coding to identify key themes and patterns. These codes were then categorized and interpreted to construct analytical findings, particularly in relation to the concepts of *'urf*, *maṣlahah*, and *mafsadah* within Islamic legal theory. The analysis was carried out iteratively to ensure consistency between empirical findings and theoretical interpretation.

To ensure the validity and credibility of the data, this study applied several verification techniques. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing information obtained from different informants, while method triangulation was achieved by integrating interviews,

observations, and document analysis. In addition, member checking was carried out by confirming key findings with selected informants, and prolonged engagement in the field helped to enhance the reliability of the data. Through these measures, the study ensures that its findings are both credible and academically robust.

B. Results And Discussion

1. The Practice of the Uang Hantaran Tradition in Riau Malay Custom

As conveyed by Mr. Asral (55), a resident of Mempura, Siak Regency, he stated:

"Marriage is a sacred event that ideally happens only once in a lifetime. It is therefore unfortunate if this sacred moment is not celebrated properly. To hold a wedding reception requires significant costs, especially today when the cost of living is high and prices of basic necessities continue to rise. This is where the importance of uang hantaran lies, as it helps the bride's family organize the wedding feast (walimatul 'ursy)."

Muhammad Haris, an informant from Dumai, stated:

"Uang hantaran is a tradition that reflects the seriousness of the groom toward his bride. It is also a symbol of their unity in building a household, so that in the future they avoid negative behavior, as they share the same goals."

Based on an interview with Mr. Wan Hadi (43), a resident of Tualang District, Siak Regency, regarding his understanding of uang hantaran, he explained:

"It is money given by the groom's family to the bride's family as part of the wedding offering (hantaran). In Malay terms, it is known as hantaran belanja for the groom's side and menerima hantaran belanja for the bride's side. Uang hantaran refers to cash given by the groom's family to the bride's family, while barang hantaran refers to other items or equipment symbolizing daily necessities after marriage, such as jewelry, clothing, toiletries, prayer equipment, and others."

Meanwhile, Mr. Jufrizal (41), also from Siak Regency, defined uang hantaran as follows:

“Uang hantaran is a gift given by the groom to his future spouse as a symbol of affection, prosperity, and hope for a happy life together. It is brought by the groom’s family to the bride’s family as a sign of serious intention to marry and as a form of respect toward the bride’s parents for raising their daughter to adulthood. The money is given to the future in-laws to support wedding expenses.”

He also explained the difference between uang hantaran and barang hantaran:

“Uang hantaran is financial in nature, while barang hantaran is material. The money serves as a form of respect and assistance for covering wedding costs, while barang hantaran consists of items packaged in gift boxes as symbols of affection and daily needs for the bride, such as prayer equipment, clothes, toiletries, cosmetics, jewelry, bags, shoes, and so on.”

A similar view was expressed by Ms. Nivorita Aulia Asmara (30) from Tualang:

“The practice of uang hantaran is positive. For me, it is a beneficial tradition for both parties. On one hand, it shows the groom’s responsibility in making the relationship lawful; on the other, it reflects his respect for the bride. There is no fixed amount it is determined through mutual agreement based on the groom’s ability, and the bride accepts it sincerely.”

Mr. Wan Hadi (43), a resident of Perawang, also stated:

“Uang hantaran is money given by the groom’s family to the bride’s family as part of the wedding offering, known in Malay as hantaran belanja.”

He further clarified:

“Barang hantaran consists of items symbolizing daily needs in married life, such as jewelry, clothing, prayer equipment, and toiletries.”

The determination of uang hantaran is typically made through a mutual deliberation process (musyawarah), either separately or alongside the engagement ceremony. However, the final decision generally lies with the

bride's family. If the amount is considered too high, negotiations may occur, but the ultimate authority remains with the bride's side.

According to Mr. Syafrin (53), a traditional leader in Siak Regency:

"Uang hantaran is part of a tradition developed in Siak, based on mutual agreement. If it is to be increased, both parties must be willing to sacrifice; if reduced, both must be willing to accept. The essence of Malay culture is that we do not 'sell' our daughters. This hantaran serves to support the wedding celebration, which itself is not obligatory in religion. Therefore, wisdom is needed so that outsiders do not misjudge Malay customs."

Thus, once the bride's family determines the amount, the groom's side is expected to fulfill it. If unable to do so, marriages are often canceled. Those who are capable are encouraged to pay promptly. After payment, the money is managed by the bride's family for wedding expenses and other needs. This rationale often leads to higher demands, as experienced by Muhammad Haris, who was required to provide IDR 35,000,000 and had to take a loan to fulfill it. In some areas of Siak Regency, according to Mr. Syafrin, the typical amount ranges between IDR 35,000,000 and 40,000,000, depending on whether the location is urban or rural, as well as current costs of goods and wedding needs. He added that factors such as the groom's background and the bride's educational level can influence the amount, although these should not be the sole determinants. Mutual agreement should remain the guiding principle.

Muhammad Hafizal, S.H., an Islamic religious counselor at the office of Religious Affairs (KUA) in Tualang, shared:

"Just earlier, a groom-to-be came to me confused after submitting his registration form. He said that the bride's parents suddenly increased the agreed hantaran from ten million to forty million rupiah. He was deeply distressed because the amount was far beyond his means."

The Head of the KUA in Tualang stated:

"If the marriage is between two Malays, uang hantaran is generally not an issue, as both sides understand it as part of tradition. However,

problems often arise in interethnic marriages, where one party is unfamiliar with this practice.”

He added:

“From a customary perspective, it is a contribution or assistance from the groom to the bride’s family simply put, ‘money for provisions.’ From an Islamic legal perspective, there is no specific textual basis for hantaran, unlike mahr. Personally, I see it as a form of assistance to ensure the wedding can be carried out properly.”

Such issues often create difficulties for families. To meet the demands, some sell valuable assets such as farmland or plantations, while others take loans, which can later affect household harmony due to debt burdens. In Pekanbaru, the practice varies. According to Mr. Firman Surya Putra (51):

“Pekanbaru is a multiethnic city. The practice of uang hantaran exists but is less common compared to Siak, Bengkalis, or coastal Riau. Before the 2000s, it was rare; usually only mahr was determined. However, recently, the practice has reemerged.”

Meanwhile, Mr. Jaidil Kamal (48) stated:

“In Pekanbaru, uang hantaran remains a common tradition in Malay marriages, determined through mutual agreement, though typically dominated by the bride’s family. It is both supported and criticized some see it as cultural preservation and assistance, while others view it as outdated and burdensome. Adjustments and deeper understanding are needed.”

Mr. Bambang Supradi (39) added:

“In Pekanbaru, uang hantaran is essentially assistance for wedding expenses. If the wedding is held in a hotel, the amount adjusts accordingly; if at home, it matches the required cost. Some also associate it with fulfilling household needs for the couple.”

In general, uang hantaran takes the form of money determined by the bride’s family and agreed upon by the groom’s side. It is fundamentally a product of mutual agreement, though amounts vary by region. As mentioned earlier, Muhammad Haris had to borrow money to meet a demand of IDR 35,000,000.

According to H. Njamudin, S.HI., M.H., Head of the KUA in Tualang: *"Hantaran is not only money but also includes clothing, accessories, even personal items. However, I have not found a clear basis for this practice in either customary law or Islamic law. Yet in society, it can create conflict if not fulfilled. Sometimes people even say that if one cannot meet the demand, others will which is inappropriate. If hantaran leads to harm (maḍarat), it contradicts its nature as merely a tradition, not a requirement of marriage. There is also an element of ego, where higher hantaran is associated with higher social status, especially if the bride has higher education or professional status. Many end up borrowing from banks, microfinance institutions, or even loan sharks, and ultimately both husband and wife suffer the consequences after marriage."*

2. The Impact of the Practice of Uang Hantaran

a. Positive Impacts

The following are the positive impacts of the tradition of determining uang hantaran in marriage:

1) Supporting the Family's Economy

The tradition of uang hantaran can significantly support the bride's family economically, especially for those from middle- to lower-income backgrounds, even though it may be a financial burden for the groom. This is because the funds are largely allocated for wedding expenses and the bride's personal needs (Harun et al., 2024). Without uang hantaran, it may be difficult to hold the wedding celebration (walimatul 'ursy) as desired. It also helps cover personal necessities such as jewelry, clothing, and other items. Therefore, the provision of uang hantaran becomes highly meaningful. For example, Nivorita received uang hantaran amounting to IDR 50,000,000, which greatly helped ease her family's wedding expenses.

2) Increasing Motivation for the Groom to Work Hard

The tradition of uang hantaran encourages men to be more diligent and hardworking. A man who wishes to marry but lacks

sufficient financial means may be unable to meet the required amount, which could lead to the cancellation of the marriage (Avita et al., 2022). As a result, he is motivated to work harder to fulfill the expectation. This was expressed by Andri (31), who had to work diligently to save enough money to meet the *uang hantaran* requirement for his marriage.

3) Encouraging a Habit of Saving and Frugality

The practice of *uang hantaran* also fosters financial discipline, encouraging individuals to develop habits of saving and living frugally. Since only those with sufficient financial resources can meet the requirement, individuals with limited means must learn to save and manage their finances carefully. This was also experienced by Andri (31), who, despite having a modest income, worked and saved diligently in order to meet the expectations set by his future in-laws.

b. Negative Impacts

1) Financial Burden on Lower-Income Men

The practice of *uang hantaran* undeniably places a burden on men, especially those from modest economic backgrounds or with limited income. The groom is not only expected to provide money to the bride's family but also to bear his own wedding expenses. This burden becomes evident when he is forced to economize, take on additional jobs, or work extra hours to gather the required amount.

2) Custom Taking Precedence over Religion

When the amount of *mahr* (dowry) is set lower than *uang hantaran*, it creates the impression that *mahr* has less value, even though it is an essential pillar (*rukn*) of marriage in Islam. If one of the pillars is not properly fulfilled, the marriage may be considered invalid. Ideally, *uang hantaran* should be integrated into the *mahr*, or eliminated altogether, to emphasize the primacy of *mahr* in Islamic teachings.

3) Indebtedness

Financial difficulties often lead individuals to seek loans from family, friends, or financial institutions. This results in debt, which

many men must repay after marriage, reducing their household spending. From an Islamic perspective, loans involving interest (riba) such as those from conventional banks are problematic, as they may remove the spiritual blessing (barakah) from the marriage.

4) Risk of Adultery (Zina)

One of the purposes of marriage is to channel sexual desires lawfully. When obstacles such as high uang hantaran prevent marriage, individuals may be indirectly hindered from fulfilling this need through legitimate means. Consequently, this may lead to immoral behavior such as adultery.

As stated in the Qur'an:

*"And do not approach zina. Indeed, it is an abomination and an evil way."
(Q.S. Al-Isra' [17]: 32)*

5) Pawning or Selling Valuable Assets

Under financial pressure, individuals may resort to selling or pawning valuable possessions, even those with sentimental value, in order to meet uang hantaran demands. This reflects the extent of sacrifice some men are willing to make to marry their chosen partner.

6) Delay of Marriage

Marriage may be postponed if the groom cannot provide the requested amount within the agreed timeframe. Typically, the bride's family grants additional time, based on their conditions or mutual agreement. However, if the groom still fails to meet the requirement, the marriage may be canceled or further delayed.

3. Uang Hantaran in the Perspective of Islamic Law

The practice of uang hantaran is not explicitly mentioned in the primary Islamic legal texts (nash), as it originates from local customs (Farid et al., 2025). However, in Islamic jurisprudence, custom ('urf or al-'adah) is recognized as a secondary source of law in matters not explicitly regulated, as long as it does not contradict the principles of shari'ah. This is reflected in the fiqh maxim: "al-'adah muhakkamah" (custom is authoritative and can serve as a basis for legal judgment), which applies in both acts of worship and social transactions

(mu'āmalāt) (Yuliatin et al., 2025).

In discussing custom within Islamic law, two key terms must be understood: al-'adah and al-'urf. Some scholars consider them synonymous, while others distinguish between them, though both are closely related (Luthfilhakim & Hidayati, 2025). In Islamic legal theory, 'urf refers to practices widely recognized and consistently performed within a community, whether in speech or action (Susanti, 2024). Etymologically, 'urf means something considered good and accepted by sound reasoning. Terminologically, as defined by Abdul Karim Zaidan, it refers to something familiar and commonly practiced by a society, becoming an integral part of their lives. Similarly, Abdurrahman Dahlan defines 'urf as:

“Something that people are accustomed to and consistently follow, whether in the form of commonly practiced actions or expressions understood in a specific meaning beyond their linguistic origin.”

Imam al-Ghazali, in Al-Mustashfa, defines 'urf as:

“Something (whether words or actions) that is firmly established in the human soul and accepted by sound intellect and natural disposition.”

From a linguistic perspective, al-'adah derives from the concept of repetition, meaning actions or expressions performed repeatedly until they become habitual and easy to carry out. According to the majority of scholars (jumhur ulama), a practice can be considered 'adah if it is performed at least three times consecutively (Muhsin et al., 2025). The term muḥakkamah implies that such customs can be used as a basis for resolving disputes (Jafar et al., 2024). Custom, therefore, functions as a regulatory framework for social relations and aims to achieve public benefit (maṣlaḥah) and ease in human life (Amin et al., 2024). However, for a custom to be accepted within Islamic law, it must meet certain conditions:

- a. No specific textual evidence (*nash*) exists in the Qur'an or Sunnah that directly governs the issue.
- b. It does not contradict Islamic principles, nor lead to harm (*mafsadah*), hardship, or injustice.
- c. It is widely practiced within the community, not limited to a small

group of individuals.

Thus, the practice of uang hantaran can be accommodated within Islamic law under the concept of 'urf, provided it aligns with these conditions and does not result in harm or contradict fundamental Islamic teachings.

C. Conclusion

The tradition of uang hantaran remains a deeply rooted and widely practiced element in Riau Malay marriage customs. This study finds that, in principle, the determination of uang hantaran is based on mutual agreement between the families of the bride and groom and serves several positive functions, including providing financial support for wedding expenses, enhancing the symbolic value of the bride, and reflecting the groom's commitment. However, in practice, the imposition of excessive amounts often leads to adverse consequences, such as financial burdens, indebtedness, delayed or canceled marriages, and broader social risks, including moral vulnerability and increasing rates of postponed marriage. From the perspective of Islamic law, although uang hantaran is not explicitly regulated in the Qur'an or Sunnah, it can be accommodated within the framework of 'urf (custom). Its legal status is therefore conditional: it is permissible when it promotes maşlahah (benefit) but becomes invalid ('urf fāsid) when it results in mafsadah (harm).

Theoretically, this study contributes to the development of Islamic legal scholarship by demonstrating how 'urf can function as a dynamic analytical tool in evaluating contemporary socio-cultural practices. It highlights the importance of integrating empirical social realities with normative Islamic legal principles, particularly in distinguishing between acceptable and unacceptable customs. This approach enriches the discourse on Islamic family law by providing a more contextual and adaptive framework for assessing local traditions.

Practically, the findings of this study have important implications for the community and relevant institutions. For society, there is a need to promote a more proportional and flexible understanding of

uang hantaran, ensuring that it remains within reasonable limits and does not hinder the primary objectives of marriage in Islam. For religious authorities and institutions such as the Office of Religious Affairs (KUA), this study suggests the importance of providing guidance, education, and premarital counseling that emphasizes the distinction between cultural practices and religious obligations, particularly regarding the prioritization of mahr over uang hantaran. Additionally, community leaders and customary authorities are encouraged to reformulate local norms to prevent excessive demands that may create social and economic hardship.

Finally, this study recommends that future research further explore the transformation of marriage customs in different socio-economic contexts, as well as comparative studies across regions to better understand the diversity of 'urf in Muslim societies. Quantitative approaches may also complement this study by measuring the broader socio-economic impacts of uang hantaran. Such efforts will contribute to a more comprehensive and interdisciplinary understanding of the interaction between culture and Islamic law in contemporary contexts.

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