



Determining Marriage Timing Based on the Javanese Traditional Calendar: An Islamic Legal Perspective

Salamah*

Universitas Islam Sumatera Utara

Email: salamah129@gmail.com

Abstract

This study aims to understand how the Javanese transmigrant community in Tangsi Village, Lingga Bayu District, Mandailing Natal Regency, practices the use of the Javanese calendar in determining wedding dates. Employing a case study approach, the research integrates sociological analysis with the fiqh concept of 'urf. The findings show that some members of the community continue to rely on the Javanese calendar as a symbolic form of effort to prevent undesirable events that might disrupt the stages of the wedding ceremony, while others have begun to abandon this tradition due to the strong influence of Mandailing culture and a growing shift toward more rational modes of thinking. From the perspective of legal pluralism, the persistence of this practice reflects the coexistence of Javanese customary norms, Mandailing traditions, and Islamic law, all of which interact within the same social sphere. Meanwhile, the theory of 'urf explains that this practice is acceptable in Islamic law as long as it is understood as a social custom that does not contradict the principles of faith and is not believed to determine fate.

Keywords: *Marriage; Javanese Calendar; Islamic Law*

Abstrak: Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk memahami bagaimana praktik penggunaan kalender Jawa dalam penentuan hari pernikahan oleh masyarakat Jawa transmigran di Desa Tangsi, Kecamatan Lingga Bayu, Kabupaten Mandailing Natal. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan studi kasus, penelitian ini memadukan analisis sosiologis dan fiqh 'urf. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa sebagian masyarakat masih mempercayai kalender Jawa sebagai bentuk ikhtiar simbolik untuk mencegah hal-hal buruk yang dikhawatirkan mengganggu rangkaian prosesi pernikahan, sementara sebagian lainnya mulai meninggalkannya akibat pengaruh kuat budaya Mandailing dan pergeseran pola pikir menjadi lebih rasional. Dari perspektif legal pluralism, keberlanjutan praktik ini mencerminkan koeksistensi antara norma adat Jawa, adat Mandailing, dan hukum Islam yang saling berinteraksi dalam ranah sosial yang sama. Sementara itu, teori 'urf menjelaskan bahwa praktik tersebut dapat diterima dalam hukum Islam selama dipahami sebagai kebiasaan sosial yang tidak bertentangan dengan prinsip akidah dan tidak diyakini sebagai penentu takdir.

Kata Kunci: *Pernikahan; Kalender Jawa; Hukum Islam*



INTRODUCTION

Marriage rituals in Indonesia represent a rich intersection of religion, culture, and social identity (Riyani, 2019). Within Javanese communities, determining the appropriate timing for marriage remains inseparable from the use of the Javanese traditional calendar. Many couples continue to consult *weton*, *neptu*, and other symbolic calculations to identify an auspicious day that is believed to bring harmony, prosperity, and protection from misfortune. Although modern life has transformed many social practices, this cultural custom persists as part of a deeply rooted belief system that connects individuals to ancestral heritage and collective identity (DALDJOENI, 1984)

The widespread use of the Javanese calendar reflects not only long-standing cultural continuity but also the community's perception of marriage as a spiritually and socially consequential institution. Families often believe that selecting the right time ensures a stable union, prevents conflict, and enhances the well-being of future generations. The decision-making process involves family elders, traditional experts, and spiritual advisors, suggesting that this tradition is still socially authoritative and emotionally persuasive. Consequently, couples frequently submit to customary prescriptions to maintain social acceptance and avoid negative stigma associated with violating cultural norms (Rofiq, 2024).

From the perspective of Islamic law, this phenomenon raises a critical question about the relationship between local tradition ('urf) and religious norms. Islam regulates marriage as an act of worship and social responsibility, yet it does not prescribe specific auspicious dates for conducting a wedding. Thus, determining marriage timing through Javanese calculations becomes a subject of legal scrutiny: whether such practices align with permissible 'urf that supports public benefit (*maslahah*), or whether they risk merging into superstitious beliefs that contradict Islamic principles of *tawhid* and reliance upon God. An Islamic legal assessment is therefore essential to determine the legitimacy and theological implications of this tradition (van Huis, 2025).

Previous studies have examined local marital customs within anthropological and Islamic legal frameworks, highlighting the dynamics of legal pluralism in Indonesia where religious law, state law, and customary law coexist. Research by scholars such as Geertz (1983), Abdullah (2018), and Nurhayati (2021) demonstrates that Javanese cultural practices continue to influence Islamic marriage rituals and shape decision-making processes in society. However, there remains limited academic focus specifically on the internal logic of calendar-based marriage timing and its legal evaluation within Islamic jurisprudence, particularly using the concepts of *living law* and 'urf in contemporary practice.

Therefore, this study seeks to analyze the socio-legal dimensions of determining marriage timing using the Javanese traditional calendar and evaluate its status from the perspective of Islamic law. The research aims to

investigate the cultural rationale behind this practice, its acceptance within the community, and the extent to which it conforms to Islamic legal principles. To guide this inquiry, the following research question is posed: How does the practice of determining marriage timing using the Javanese calendar align with Islamic legal doctrine in contemporary Indonesian society?

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative research design with an anthropological legal perspective to understand the cultural logic and normative implications of determining marriage timing through the Javanese traditional calendar in a non-Javanese community. The research was conducted in Lingga Bayu Subdistrict, Mandailing Natal Regency, a unique setting where Javanese cultural practices coexist within a predominately non-Javanese population, indicating the strong persistence of calendar-based customs in marriage decision-making. Primary data were collected through structured interviews with key informants, including Javanese traditional leaders, community elders, and local residents who practice calendar-based marriage arrangements. Additionally, direct observation and documentation of community marriage rituals and related discussions were carried out to gain deeper contextual understanding. Secondary data were sourced from scholarly articles, academic theses, government reports, websites, and media publications to support the credibility and triangulation of findings.

The data analysis process followed the qualitative analytical procedures of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, consisting of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. An anthropological legal framework was applied to interpret the interaction between customary norms, Islamic legal principles, and community behavior in selecting auspicious marriage dates. Legal pluralism and 'urf theory were used to assess whether the practice operates as a living law that complements Islamic teachings or whether it potentially contradicts core tenets of Islamic jurisprudence. Through this methodological approach, the study sought to uncover how cultural beliefs influence legal perceptions and how Islamic law is negotiated within localized social systems.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Life of Javanese Communities in Mandailing Natal

The Javanese community residing in Tangsi Village, Lingga Bayu Subdistrict, Mandailing Natal Regency, represents a migration-based population that has long settled outside its original cultural homeland. Although the village is geographically and culturally embedded within the Mandailing ethnic region, a segment of its residents continues to maintain Javanese cultural identity, particularly in the context of marriage. Tangsi Village, with a population of approximately 450 people consisting of 235

males, 215 females, and 138 households, relies primarily on plantation work as their main source of livelihood. The entire community is predominantly Muslim, which creates a shared religious foundation between the Javanese migrants and the local Mandailing population.

Despite assimilation in daily life, the Javanese community still preserves symbolic elements of kejawen traditions, especially in determining auspicious dates for marriage through the use of the Javanese traditional calendar. This cultural preservation reflects what anthropologists refer to as a living identity, where migration does not eliminate cultural roots but rather reconfigures them within a new sociocultural environment. Although Tangsi Village is situated 7.2 kilometers from the Lingga Bayu district center, 74 kilometers from Mandailing Natal Regency, and 538 kilometers from the provincial capital of North Sumatra, the significant geographical distance from Java does not diminish the continuity of ancestral practices carried from previous generations.

The social dynamics in Tangsi Village illustrate a pattern of cultural coexistence where Javanese residents navigate between integration and differentiation. They adopt Mandailing language, customs, and social norms in public interactions, yet maintain Javanese practices in domestic and ritual life—particularly how marriage time is calculated through concepts such as *weton* and *neptu*. This dual cultural orientation reflects a plural identity, where being Muslim provides common ground with Mandailing society, while Javanese traditional rituals serve as markers of ethnic distinction and heritage preservation.

Moreover, this persistence of tradition suggests that the Javanese calendar is not merely a ritual artifact but functions as symbolic capital in Bourdieu's sociological sense: a cultural resource that strengthens group cohesion and reinforces social belonging. Marriage, being a pivotal social institution, becomes a space where cultural continuity is intentionally enacted. By adhering to traditional calendar-based beliefs, Javanese families demonstrate loyalty to ancestral customs and uphold values associated with safety, prosperity, and cosmic harmony in building a new household.

The Javanese Calendar

The Javanese calendar developed as a system that not only records the rhythm of time, but also integrates the cosmological worldview of the Javanese regarding the pursuit of harmony in life. Its temporal calculations emerge from a fusion of lunar and solar elements, combining both the movements of the moon and the sun. Essentially, the Javanese calendar consists of three layers of calculation: the seven-day week, the five-day *pasaran* cycle, and longer units of time such as the *wulan* (month), the *taun* (year), and the eight-year *windu* cycle. This structure reflects a cultural conception of time not as a linear progression but as a series of recurring cycles, each bearing its own

characteristics and symbolic meanings. Consequently, every combination of day, pasaran, and neptu becomes a meeting point between empirical and symbolic dimensions of human life (Benda, 1962).

The first layer of the Javanese calendar is the seven-day week system, which originates from Hindu-Buddhist traditions and was later adapted to incorporate Islamic elements. Days such as Monday, Tuesday, or Friday are not merely temporal markers but also hold specific numerical values. Each day has a neptu, such as Sunday with a value of 5, Monday 4, Tuesday 3, and so on. These numerical values form the foundation for the petungan tradition—a method of calculating auspicious or inauspicious signs, harmony or disharmony, in various aspects of life. When a day is combined with a pasaran, the values of both are added to determine the quality or nature of that moment. This is what enables the Javanese calendar to function not only as a chronological system but also as a knowledge system that offers ethical guidance for human actions.

The second layer is the pasaran cycle, consisting of Legi, Pahing, Pon, Wage, and Kliwon. Unlike the seven-day week, the pasaran cycle has roots in local economic and cultural structures that predate the arrival of Islam in Java. Each pasaran also possesses its own neptu: Legi (5), Pahing (9), Pon (7), Wage (4), and Kliwon (8). When determining a person's character or choosing an auspicious wedding day, people calculate the sum of a person's birth day neptu and pasaran neptu. These combinations are then interpreted using traditional petungan systems passed down through generations. In Javanese understanding, the encounter of a day and pasaran is never accidental; it forms a structure of meaning that may reveal potential harmony or potential challenges in a person's life journey (Karjanto & Beauducel, 2024).

The third layer is the structure of the wulan, taun, and windu. The Javanese calendar recognizes twelve wulan, each with its own distinct character—such as Sura, considered highly sacred, or Rejeb, associated with religious traditions. The Javanese year also consists of eight named cycles: Alip, Ehe, Jimawal, Je, Dal, Be, Wawu, and Jimakir. Together, they form a windu, an eight-year cycle. In traditional timekeeping, each year carries certain inherent traits that influence various activities, ranging from agriculture and travel to ritual ceremonies. Communities that continue to uphold this tradition often read the characteristics of each year as part of the considerations in making major decisions, especially those related to social and spiritual harmony.

Table 1. Calculation of the Javanese Calendar

Category	Element	Neptune / Character	Functions in Calculation
Day 7 Daily	Sunday	5	Basis for counting weton and day characters
	Monday	4	
	Tuesday	3	

Market 5	Wednesday	7	Combined with the day to determine the neptu weton
	Thursday	8	
	Friday	6	
	Saturday	9	
	Sweet	5	
The Moon (Javanese)	São Paulo	9	Determinants of the suitability of ritual and celebration times
	Pound	7	
	Wage	4	
	Kliwon	8	
	Sura	Sacred, full of taboos	
	Sapar	Neutral–active	
	Squirt	Religious	
	Bakda Mulud	Transition	
	Jumadilawal	Calm	
	Jumadilakir	Resolute	
Year (Windu)	Rejeb	Rituals and prayers	Determining the nature of the year in large calculations
	Ruwah	Remembering the ancestors	
	Pass	Spiritual discipline	
	Sawal	Thanksgiving	
	Dulkangidah	Preparation	
	Big	Great rituals	
	Alip	Soft, early	
	Ash	Stable	
	Jimawal	Dynamic	
	Je	Alert	
Basic Formula	Dal	Flower	Reading the nature of birth Basic category calculation (queen, match, topo, etc.) Determining the good day of the wedding, transfer, wish
	Be	Spacious	
	Wow	Tense	
	Jimakir	Cover, reflective	
	Neptu Weton	Neptu day + neptu market	
	Matchmaking	Neptu male + neptu female	
	Good Day	Neptune+Moon+Year Combination	

When all of these layers are brought together, the Javanese calendar reveals itself as a system that is both complex and subtle in the way it guides individuals to understand the flow of their lives. The calculations are not performed mechanically; rather, they are interpreted through a blend of cultural intuition, collective experience, and spiritual belief. For example, a person does not only calculate the neptu of their birth day but also considers

their position within the windu cycle, the character of the wulan in which they were born, and the compatibility between themselves and their prospective partner based on petungan jodoh. All of these elements illustrate how the Javanese calendar functions as a symbolic mechanism that merges numerical logic with traditional wisdom.

Thus, calculations within the Javanese calendar are not merely mathematical processes; they are a cultural effort by the Javanese people to interpret the will of the cosmos and to find balance within it. Determining auspicious days, weton-based compatibility, or the suitability of a marriage date represents a philosophy of life that emphasizes harmony, blessing, and order in living one's path. This is what allows the Javanese calendar to remain relevant, even among migrant communities such as the Javanese in Mandailing Natal, for it serves as a bridge between ancestral tradition and the need to find meaning amid changing times.

Belief in Using the Javanese Calendar in Marriage

The understanding of the Javanese community in Tangsi Village regarding the determination of wedding dates through the Javanese calendar stems from the view that marriage is not merely a social contract but a sacred moment marking an existential transition from one phase of life to the next. Because this event is ideally expected to occur only once in a lifetime, it is perceived as a moment that must be safeguarded from various risks, disturbances, or ill omens. The calculation of auspicious days—usually referring to weton, neptu, and partner compatibility—is understood as a symbolic mechanism that helps families mitigate the possibility of misfortune, disruption, or obstacles that may arise during the series of ceremonies, from the akad to traditional rituals and the reception. Within the framework of cultural anthropology, this practice reflects how traditional societies manage uncertainty through systems of meaning, making the selection of auspicious days a form of cultural rationality that provides psychological reassurance as well as social legitimacy.

However, the social dynamics in Tangsi Village reveal a more complex layer of identity. The Javanese community in this area consists of descendants of transmigrants who later integrated with the Mandailing community. This condition generates a cultural interaction that leads to adaptation, negotiation, and even transformation of traditional practices. Some Javanese families continue to maintain the use of the Javanese calendar as a means of preserving ancestral continuity. For them, tradition is not merely a cultural memory but a medium for sustaining social cohesion and communal identity. Upholding the calendar calculation in determining wedding dates becomes both a symbol of respect for their origins and an effort to preserve practices that are increasingly eroded by modernity.

On the other hand, part of the community has abandoned this tradition. This can be explained through Koentjaraningrat's theory of cultural change, which states that intercultural contact can produce acculturation or assimilation. In the context of Tangsi Village, daily interaction with the more dominant Mandailing culture—demographically and socially—has led some Javanese residents to adopt local patterns of thought and practice, including in determining wedding dates. The younger generation, in particular, tends to see the Javanese calendar as no longer relevant to practical needs and modern logic. They prefer to choose dates based on time availability, economic readiness, and administrative considerations. This perspective reflects a shift from cosmological orientation toward rational-instrumental orientation, consistent with modernization theory, which posits that societies transition from magical worldviews to pragmatic choices.

Even so, the coexistence of these differing views demonstrates the resilience of a flexible cultural identity. Tradition does not disappear; it is renegotiated according to the new social context. This aligns with Pierre Bourdieu's practice theory regarding *habitus*, where cultural actions are shaped by past experiences yet always open to change through social interaction. The Javanese community in Tangsi Village exhibits a *habitus* situated between two poles: preserving ancestral heritage and adapting to the Mandailing cultural values that are more deeply rooted in their surroundings (Sadat et al., 2023).

Thus, the use of the Javanese calendar in determining wedding dates should not be viewed merely as a traditional ritual but as an expression of identity, a way of managing uncertainty, and a reflection of the ongoing dialogue between Javanese tradition and Mandailing social reality. This practice illustrates that culture does not exist in a static form; it lives through continual adaptation shaped by the direction of societal change.

Islamic Legal Review of Marriage Based on the Javanese Calendar

From the perspective of Islamic jurisprudence, the tradition of selecting a wedding day through the calculation of the Javanese calendar is not automatically considered contrary to the sharia, as long as the practice is understood as a form of *urf*, namely a socio-cultural custom embedded within the community. Islamic jurisprudence upholds a foundational principle that local customs which do not violate religious teachings may serve as a basis for legal consideration. The jurisprudential maxim *al-adah muhakkamah* affirms that customary practice may be legally recognized so long as it does not contain elements of *shirk* or beliefs attributing the power to determine fortune or misfortune to anything other than God. For this reason, the Javanese tradition of determining auspicious days for marriage is permissible when understood as a social, organizational, or psychological practice, rather than as a theological doctrine that contradicts Islamic creed (Nafi'ah, 2022).

Another principle that reinforces the permissibility of this tradition is *al-umur bi maqashidiha*, which holds that the value of an action is determined by the intention behind it. If Javanese families choose a wedding date to create peace of mind, avoid family disputes, and harmonize schedules so that all parties can be present, then the practice falls within the category of what is religiously permissible. It may even carry an element of benefit (*maslahah*) because it fosters a supportive atmosphere and strengthens familial bonds. As long as there is no belief that specific dates possess metaphysical powers that override divine will, the accompanying intentions remain within the realm of legitimate human effort sanctioned by the sharia (Indiantoro et al., 2022).

Islamic jurisprudence also recognizes the principle of *sadd az-zari'ah*, the prevention of harm by blocking potential pathways that might lead to undesirable outcomes. In this context, selecting a date considered appropriate by the extended family may help prevent social tension. Disagreements about dates deemed “inappropriate” according to custom can generate conflict, especially within Javanese culture, which places great value on respecting elders and community leaders. By referring to the Javanese calendar as a social mechanism, families preserve cultural propriety and safeguard harmonious relations, which is substantively aligned with the Islamic principle of maintaining communal welfare. Islam does not prohibit cultural practices when they serve as instruments for promoting unity and avoiding harm.

At the same time, Islamic jurisprudence emphasizes that the validity of a marriage contract is not bound to any particular date. A marriage is valid when it fulfills the required pillars and conditions: the presence of the bride and groom, a guardian, two witnesses, and an offer-and-acceptance formula (*ijab and qabul*). No specific day is mandated as a prerequisite for the validity of the contract. Thus, the use of the Javanese calendar is never an obligatory component but rather a customary arrangement that complements the social dimension of marriage ceremonies. As long as it is not treated as a condition of validity or as a determinant of destiny, it remains within the realm of acceptable cultural practice.

Another principle, *al-masyaqqah tajlibu at-taysir*, states that hardship necessitates ease. If differing views regarding the wedding date risk creating familial friction or difficulty, then following local custom without violating the sharia becomes a permissible form of facilitation granted by the religion. In this way, custom functions as a conciliatory path that calms family concerns without compromising foundational jurisprudential principles. Here, customary practice becomes a social instrument that helps ensure the smooth implementation of religious obligations.

The legal maxim *dar'ul mafasid muqaddam 'ala jalbil mashalih*, which prioritizes preventing harm over pursuing benefit, also supports the continuation of this tradition. Abruptly rejecting custom may damage family cohesion, offend elders, or cause social discord. Preserving social stability

aligns with the broader objectives of Islamic law (*maqashid al-syariah*), which include safeguarding religion, life, family, and social relations. When custom helps maintain communal harmony, the practice is not merely permissible but may be considered beneficial.

Taken together, these jurisprudential principles demonstrate that the Javanese practice of calculating auspicious days for marriage is acceptable as long as it is not believed to determine fate and does not replace God's exclusive authority over destiny. The tradition is best understood as a cultural strategy for organizing social life, reassuring families, and promoting harmony in a sacred social event. Islam does not reject cultural practices; it embraces them when they support the pursuit of communal well-being and do not conflict with foundational theological principles. The integration of sharia and local custom in this context reflects the flexibility of Islamic jurisprudence in accommodating living traditions within society (Akhiroh, 2024).

CONCLUSIONS

Within the framework of Islamic jurisprudence, the Javanese custom of determining a wedding day through calculations based on the Javanese calendar remains permissible as long as it is understood as a social practice intended to preserve calmness, family harmony, and the smooth execution of the ceremony, rather than as a metaphysical belief that rivals the will of God. Jurisprudential principles such as *al-adah muhakkamah*, *al-umur bi maqashidiha*, *maslahah mursalah*, and *dar'ul mafasid muqaddam 'ala jalbil mashalih* affirm that local traditions which do not contradict the sharia may be followed as instruments for strengthening social relations, preventing conflict, and ensuring that marriage proceeds in a peaceful atmosphere.

Thus, the integration between Islamic teachings and Javanese cultural practices demonstrates that the sharia possesses the flexibility to embrace functional cultural values, while Javanese communities may continue to observe their traditions without crossing the boundaries of creed. This integration implies that marriage in Islam is not merely a legal contract but also a cultural space that requires social harmony, respect for tradition, and a spiritual consciousness firmly rooted in the principle of divine oneness.

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