



**THE TRANSFORMATION OF *DELEH MENDELEH*: AN ‘URF-BASED  
ANALYSIS OF RECIPROCITY IN SUKOWATI VILLAGE**

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**ABSTRACT**

*This study aims to examine the transformation of the deleh mendeleh tradition within marriage practices in Sukowati Village, Gresik Regency, through the lens of ‘urf in Islamic law. Traditionally regarded as a form of voluntary mutual assistance, empirical findings reveal that the practice has evolved into a socially binding system of reciprocity characterized by systematic record-keeping and expectations of repayment. This qualitative field research involved 10 informants selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation, and analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings indicate a dual perception within the community. While some participants continue to view deleh mendeleh as an expression of solidarity, others experience it as a social obligation accompanied by economic pressure. Empirical evidence shows that recorded contributions ranging from IDR 50,000 to IDR 500,000 generate repayment expectations that disproportionately burden lower-income households. From the perspective of ‘urf, the practice may be classified as ‘urf ṣaḥīḥ when based on voluntariness and oriented toward ta‘āwun and maṣlaḥah. However, when shaped by social pressure and economic burden, it shifts toward ‘urf fāsid, as it undermines the principles of justice and mutual consent (riḍā). This study contributes to uṣūl al-fiqh discourse by demonstrating that ‘urf is dynamically shaped by processes of social institutionalization, thereby requiring continuous reassessment to ensure its alignment with Islamic legal principles.*

**Kata kunci :**

*‘Urf, Resiprositas,  
Tradisi, Deleh  
Mendeleh*

**ABSTRAK**

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji transformasi tradisi deleh mendeleh dalam praktik pernikahan di Desa Sukowati, Kabupaten Gresik, melalui perspektif ‘urf dalam hukum Islam. Secara tradisional, praktik ini dipahami sebagai bentuk tolong-menolong yang bersifat sukarela, namun temuan empiris menunjukkan bahwa praktik tersebut telah berkembang menjadi sistem resiprositas yang bersifat mengikat secara sosial, yang ditandai dengan pencatatan yang sistematis serta adanya ekspektasi pengembalian. Penelitian lapangan ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan melibatkan 10 informan yang dipilih melalui teknik purposive sampling. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara mendalam, observasi, dan dokumentasi, serta dianalisis menggunakan analisis tematik. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan adanya persepsi ganda di tengah masyarakat. Sebagian informan masih memandang deleh mendeleh sebagai bentuk solidaritas sosial, sementara sebagian lainnya mengalaminya sebagai kewajiban sosial yang disertai tekanan ekonomi.



Bukti empiris menunjukkan bahwa kontribusi yang tercatat, berkisar antara Rp50.000 hingga Rp500.000, menimbulkan ekspektasi pengembalian yang secara tidak proporsional membebani rumah tangga berpenghasilan rendah. Dari perspektif 'urf, praktik ini dapat diklasifikasikan sebagai 'urf ṣaḥīḥ apabila dilaksanakan secara sukarela serta berorientasi pada nilai ta'āwun dan maṣlahah. Namun, ketika dipengaruhi oleh tekanan sosial dan beban ekonomi, praktik tersebut bergeser menjadi 'urf fāsid, karena bertentangan dengan prinsip keadilan dan kerelaan (riḍā). Penelitian ini berkontribusi terhadap diskursus uṣūl al-fiqh dengan menunjukkan bahwa 'urf bersifat dinamis dan dibentuk oleh proses institusionalisasi sosial, sehingga memerlukan penilaian ulang secara berkelanjutan guna memastikan kesesuaiannya dengan prinsip-prinsip hukum Islam.

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## INTRODUCTION

In social life, communities continuously develop customs and traditions that are commonly referred to as 'urf. Classical and contemporary jurists define 'urf as practices that are widely recognized, consistently observed, and collectively accepted within a particular society.<sup>1</sup> These practices emerge through repeated social interaction and gradually form socially binding norms that regulate communal relations. Thus, 'urf is not merely habitual behavior, but a normative social construct that shapes expectations and guides human interaction.<sup>2</sup>

In responding to such customs, Islamic jurisprudence does not adopt a rigid or dismissive stance. Rather, a mujtahid first examines whether a particular practice is supported, permitted, or restricted by textual evidence (*naṣṣ*) from the Qur'an and Sunnah.<sup>3</sup> When a custom does not contradict these sources and promotes public benefit (*maṣlahah*), it may be accepted as a valid legal consideration. Conversely, when a custom introduces elements of injustice, coercion, or harm, it becomes subject to critical evaluation, modification, or rejection.<sup>4</sup> This process reflects the dynamic interaction between normative revelation and evolving social realities within Islamic law.

In the Indonesian context, local traditions play a central role in structuring communal life, particularly in social ceremonies such as weddings. One enduring practice in various regions of East Java is the *buwuhan* tradition. In Sukowati Village, Gresik

<sup>1</sup> Fitriani, L., L. S. Anditya, M. Saniyyah, N. N. Sari, and I. Nur, "Eksistensi dan Kehujjahan 'Urf sebagai Sumber Istinbāt Hukum," *Al-Hikmah: Jurnal Studi Agama-Agama* 7, no. 2 (2021): 246–256, <http://dx.doi.org/10.30651/ah.v7i2.8088>.

<sup>2</sup> S. Wandu, "Eksistensi 'Urf dan Adat Kebiasaan sebagai Dalil Fiqih," *Jurnal Hukum Keluarga dan Hukum Islam* 2, no. 1 (2018): 181–196, <https://doi.org/10.22373/sjkh.v2i1.3111>.

<sup>3</sup> M. Ridho, "Rooting Fiqh in Modern Ijtihad: Adapting Fiqh to Community Needs," *Al-Ahkam* 23, no. 1 (2022), <https://doi.org/10.15548/alakhkam.v13i1.4439>.

<sup>4</sup> Fitriani, L., L. S. Anditya, M. Saniyyah, N. N. Sari, and I. Nur, "Eksistensi dan Kehujjahan 'Urf sebagai Sumber Istinbāt Hukum," *Al-Hikmah: Jurnal Studi Agama-Agama* 7, no. 2 (2021): 246–256, <http://dx.doi.org/10.30651/ah.v7i2.8088>.



Regency, this practice is locally known as *deleh mendeleh*, referring to the custom whereby community members contribute money or household necessities to families hosting wedding celebrations. Traditionally, these contributions are given voluntarily and symbolize social solidarity, mutual assistance (*ta'āwun*), and communal care.<sup>5</sup>

However, contemporary developments indicate a transformation in the meaning and practice of *deleh mendeleh*. What was originally understood as voluntary assistance has gradually evolved into a structured system of reciprocity. Contributions are often recorded and implicitly regarded as obligations to be repaid in future events. Empirical observations reveal that this expectation of reciprocity may generate social pressure and economic burden, particularly for households with limited financial capacity. In some cases, individuals report feeling compelled to reciprocate even when facing financial hardship, indicating a shift from voluntary charity toward socially binding obligation.<sup>6</sup>

Several previous studies have examined the *buwuhan* tradition from different perspectives. Saputri and Ashari analyze it through an accounting framework, categorizing it as either receivable or grant depending on its social interpretation.<sup>7</sup> Chafid and Masrokhin interpret *buwuhan* as a voluntary charitable practice (*'urf 'ām*) without binding obligation.<sup>8</sup> Meanwhile, Rachmawati and Anwar identify a dual perception within society, where *buwuhan* is viewed both as *hibah* (gift) and as debt due to expectations of repayment.<sup>9</sup> Najib, Rachmawati, and Mashudi further highlight the economic dimensions of *buwuh* practices within local communities.<sup>10</sup> Although these studies provide valuable insights, they primarily focus on economic or descriptive dimensions.

Limited attention has been given to a systematic evaluation of *buwuhan* using the typology of *'urf ṣaḥīḥ* (valid custom) and *'urf fāsid* (invalid custom) within the framework of *uṣūl al-fiqh*, particularly when supported by empirical field data.<sup>11</sup> This gap is significant, as the transformation of local traditions into structured obligations raises

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<sup>5</sup> A. Najib, Rachmawati, and Mashudi, "Analisis Tradisi Buwuh pada Undangan Pernikahan di Madura Perspektif Ekonomi Islam (Studi Desa Burneh)," *Jurnal Akuntansi, Keuangan, Perpajakan dan Tata Kelola Perusahaan (JAKPT)* 2, no. 1 (2024): 350–357, <https://doi.org/10.70248/jakpt.v2i1.1235>.

<sup>6</sup> S. A. Rachmawati and M. K. Anwar, "Budaya dan Tradisi Buwuh sebagai Hutang Piutang dalam Adat Pernikahan di Kota Surabaya," *Jurnal Ekonomika dan Bisnis Islam* 4, no. 3 (2021): 69–83, <https://doi.org/10.26740/jekobi.v4n3.p69-83>.

<sup>7</sup> E. D. Saputri and M. H. Ashari, "Tradisi Buwuh dalam Perspektif Akuntansi Piutang dan Hibah di Kecamatan Lowokwaru Kota Malang," *Prive: Jurnal Riset Akuntansi dan Keuangan* 2, no. 2 (2019): 16–25, <https://ejournal.unim.ac.id/index.php/prive/article/view/359>.

<sup>8</sup> A. I. Chafid and Masrokhin, "Tradisi Buwuhan pada Pelaksanaan Walimatul 'Ursī Perspektif 'Urf (Studi Kasus di Dusun Wonosari Desa Sekarbagus Kec. Sugio Kab. Lamongan)," *Jurnal Ilmiah Penelitian Mahasiswa* 2, no. 4 (2024): 623–633, <https://doi.org/10.61722/jipm.v2i4.329>.

<sup>9</sup> S. A. Rachmawati and M. K. Anwar, "Budaya dan Tradisi Buwuh sebagai Hutang Piutang dalam Adat Pernikahan di Kota Surabaya," *Jurnal Ekonomika dan Bisnis Islam* 4, no. 3 (2021): 69–83, <https://doi.org/10.26740/jekobi.v4n3.p69-83>.

<sup>10</sup> A. Najib, Rachmawati, and Mashudi, "Analisis Tradisi Buwuh pada Undangan Pernikahan di Madura Perspektif Ekonomi Islam (Studi Desa Burneh)," *Jurnal Akuntansi, Keuangan, Perpajakan dan Tata Kelola Perusahaan (JAKPT)* 2, no. 1 (2024): 350–357, <https://doi.org/10.70248/jakpt.v2i1.1235>.

<sup>11</sup> S. Wandu, "Eksistensi 'Urf dan Adat Kebiasaan sebagai Dalil Fiqih," *Jurnal Hukum Keluarga dan Hukum Islam* 2, no. 1 (2018): 181–196, <https://doi.org/10.22373/sjkh.v2i1.3111>.



important legal and ethical questions regarding voluntariness (*riḍā*), justice (*‘adl*), and the prevention of harm (*lā ḍarar wa lā ḍirār*).

Based on this gap, the present study aims to analyze the practice of *deleh mendeleh* through the lens of *‘urf* in Islamic law. It seeks to evaluate whether the tradition continues to fulfill the criteria of *‘urf ṣaḥīḥ* namely voluntariness, public benefit, and conformity with Sharī‘ah principles or whether its transformation into a socially binding system tends toward *‘urf fāsid*. Particular attention is given to elements of social pressure, implicit coercion, and economic burden as revealed through empirical findings.

Accordingly, this study addresses the following central question: to what extent does the reciprocal system embedded in *deleh mendeleh* conform to the principles of Islamic law? By integrating normative legal analysis with empirical field data, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of how living traditions are continuously negotiated, reinterpreted, and evaluated within the framework of Islamic jurisprudence.<sup>12</sup>

This study employs a qualitative field research approach conducted in Sukowati Village, Gresik Regency. Qualitative research is particularly suitable for exploring social phenomena within their natural context.<sup>13</sup> The research involved 10 informants selected through purposive sampling, consisting of community leaders, local residents, and individuals directly involved in the *deleh mendeleh* tradition. The characteristics of the informants are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1. Profile of Informants**

No	Informant Code	Age	Occupation	Role in Tradition
1	I1	50	Community Leader	Key informant
2	I2	42	Housewife	Contributor
3	I3	39	Wedding Host	Recipient
4	I4	47	Local Resident	Contributor
5	I5	45	Head of Family	Contributor/Recipient
6	I6	44	Private Employee	Contributor
7	I7	36	Housewife	Contributor
8	I8	52	Religious Figure	Key informant
9	I9	40	Local Resident	Contributor
10	I10	38	Informal Worker	Contributor

Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation. These techniques enable the researcher to obtain rich and contextual data directly from the field.<sup>14</sup> To strengthen empirical validity, selected interview excerpts are incorporated into the analysis. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis, involving data reduction, coding, categorization, and interpretation to identify key themes.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>12</sup> M. Ridho, “Rooting Fiqh in Modern Ijtihad: Adapting Fiqh to Community Needs,” *Al-Ahkam* 23, no. 1 (2022), <https://doi.org/10.15548/alakhkam.v13i1.4439>.

<sup>13</sup> John W. Creswell and J. David Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, 5th ed. (Los Angeles: SAGE Publications, 2018), 13–14.

<sup>14</sup> Lexy J. Moleong, *Metodologi Penelitian Kualitatif*, rev. ed. (Bandung: PT Remaja Rosdakarya, 2017), 6–7.

<sup>15</sup> Matthew B. Miles, A. Michael Huberman, and Johnny Saldaña, *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook*, 4th ed. (Los Angeles: SAGE Publications, 2020), 8–12.



The findings are subsequently examined using the theoretical framework of *'urf*, particularly the distinction between *'urf ṣaḥīḥ* and *'urf fāsid*. To ensure the credibility of the research, data triangulation was applied by comparing interview results, observations, and relevant documentation.<sup>16</sup> Through this integrative approach, the study provides a comprehensive and critically grounded analysis of the *deleh mendeleh* tradition.

## DISCUSSION

### The Concept of *'Urf* in Islamic Law

In *uṣūl al-fiqh*, the term *'urf* is conceptually equivalent to custom. In the Indonesian context, it is commonly translated as *adat*, referring to social practices that are continuously observed and collectively maintained within a community.<sup>17</sup> In juristic terminology, *'urf* denotes customs that are widely recognized and accepted, whether manifested in actions (*'urf fi'lī*) or in linguistic expressions (*'urf qawli*).<sup>18</sup> Thus, *'urf* encompasses not only repeated behavior but also shared systems of meaning that regulate social interaction and shape communal expectations.<sup>19</sup>

From a legal-theoretical perspective, *'urf* may function as a basis for legal determination provided that it satisfies specific normative conditions: it must be widely practiced, must not contradict explicit textual evidence (*naṣṣ*), must be free from elements of harm (*ḍarar*), and must realize public benefit (*maṣlahah*).<sup>20</sup> These criteria demonstrate that Islamic law does not reject social realities; rather, it incorporates them selectively through normative evaluation. In this regard, *'urf* serves as an adaptive legal instrument that bridges revealed texts and evolving social contexts.<sup>21</sup>

Classical scholars define *'urf* using various expressions, one of which states:

ما استقر في النفوس من جهة العقول وتلقته الطباع السليمة بالقبول

This definition emphasizes that *'urf* is a practice firmly established in the minds of rational individuals and accepted by sound human nature.<sup>22</sup> Accordingly, *'urf* is not merely habitual repetition but a socially internalized norm grounded in rationality and

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<sup>16</sup> Robert K. Yin, *Case Study Research and Applications: Design and Methods*, 6th ed. (Los Angeles: SAGE Publications, 2018), 45–49.

<sup>17</sup> Fitriani, L., L. S. Anditya, M. Saniyyah, N. N. Sari, and I. Nur, “Eksistensi dan Kehujjahan *'Urf* sebagai Sumber Istinbāt Hukum,” *Al-Hikmah: Jurnal Studi Agama-Agama* 7, no. 2 (2021): 246–256, <http://dx.doi.org/10.30651/ah.v7i2.8088>.

<sup>18</sup> S. Wandī, “Eksistensi *'Urf* dan Adat Kebiasaan sebagai Dalil Fiqih,” *Jurnal Hukum Keluarga dan Hukum Islam* 2, no. 1 (2018): 181–196, <https://doi.org/10.22373/sjkh.v2i1.3111>.

<sup>19</sup> F. Zainuddin, “Konsep Islam tentang Adat: Telaah Adat dan *'Urf* sebagai Sumber Hukum Islam,” *Jurnal Lisan Al-Hal* 9, no. 2 (2015): 389–407, <https://doi.org/10.35316/lisanalhal.v9i2.93>.

<sup>20</sup> D. Putri, “Konsep *'Urf* sebagai Sumber Hukum dalam Islam,” *El-Mashlahah* 10, no. 2 (2020): 14–25, <https://doi.org/10.23971/maslahah.v10i2.1911>.

<sup>21</sup> W. Susanty and T. Anggraini, “Peranan *'Urf* dan Adat dalam Pembentukan Hukum Islam dan Implikasinya terhadap Ekonomi Syariah,” *Jurnal Ilmiah Manajemen, Ekonomi dan Akuntansi* 5, no. 1 (2025): 119–128, <https://doi.org/10.55606/jurimea.v5i1.895>.

<sup>22</sup> S. A. Sarjana and I. K. Suratman, “Konsep *'Urf* dalam Penetapan Hukum Islam,” *Tsaqafah: Jurnal Peradaban Islam* 13, no. 2 (2017): 279–296, <https://doi.org/10.21111/tsaqafah.v13i2.1509>.



ethical disposition (*fiṭrah salīmah*). This implies that only practices aligned with reason and moral integrity can qualify as legally recognized custom.<sup>23</sup>

Furthermore, *urf* must be prevalent among the majority of a community and cannot be confined to isolated individuals or specific groups.<sup>24</sup> It arises from collective social experience rather than individual inclination. In practical terms, certain customs such as provisions embedded within marriage arrangements may be recognized as *urf* when they meet these conditions. However, their legal validity remains contingent upon their conformity with Shari‘ah principles, particularly in ensuring justice and preventing harm.<sup>25</sup>

Historically, *urf* gained prominence in the development of *furū’ al-fiqh*, where jurists addressed legal issues not explicitly regulated by textual sources.<sup>26</sup> In such cases, prevailing customs were used to contextualize general principles and to provide practical legal solutions. This demonstrates the dynamic and contextual nature of Islamic law, which accommodates social change while maintaining its normative foundations. Consequently, variations in legal rulings among jurists often reflect differences in social context rather than contradictions in legal doctrine.<sup>27</sup>

The majority of jurists (*jumhūr al-fuqahā’*) recognize *urf* as a valid supplementary source of law within the Shari‘ah framework.<sup>28</sup> This position is supported by the Qur’anic verse in QS. al-A‘rāf (7): 199:

حُذِ الْعَفْوَ وَأْمُرْ بِالْعُرْفِ وَأَعْرِضْ عَنِ الْجَاهِلِينَ

“Hold to forgiveness, command what is right (*al-urf*), and turn away from the ignorant.

In this verse, *al-urf* is interpreted as socially recognized goodness, indicating that Islamic law provides normative space for customs that align with ethical values and communal benefit.<sup>29</sup>

Nevertheless, the recognition of *urf* is not unconditional. A custom may only be considered valid if it fulfills several requirements: it must be widely practiced, must not contradict the Qur’an or Sunnah, must pre-exist the legal issue, and must not override explicit contractual stipulations.<sup>30</sup> These conditions ensure that *urf* remains subordinate

<sup>23</sup> Kasuwi Saiban, *Metode Penetapan Hukum Islam: Membangun Mazhab Fiqih Kontemporer di Indonesia* (Malang: Setara Press, 2019).

<sup>24</sup> D. Putri, “Konsep ‘Urf sebagai Sumber Hukum dalam Islam,” *El-Mashlahah* 10, no. 2 (2020): 14–25, <https://doi.org/10.23971/maslahah.v10i2.1911>.

<sup>25</sup> W. Susanty and T. Anggraini, “Peranan ‘Urf dan Adat dalam Pembentukan Hukum Islam dan Implikasinya terhadap Ekonomi Syariah,” *Jurnal Ilmiah Manajemen, Ekonomi dan Akuntansi* 5, no. 1 (2025): 119–128, <https://doi.org/10.55606/jurimea.v5i1.895>.

<sup>26</sup> A. Wahyuni and Harisah, “Konsep Al-‘Urf dalam Perkembangan Society 5.0 Perspektif Fiqih Kontemporer,” *Ulumuna: Jurnal Studi Keislaman* 9, no. 1 (2023), <https://doi.org/10.36420/ju.v9i1.6694>.

<sup>27</sup> M. Ridho, “Rooting Fiqh in Modern Ijtihad: Adapting Fiqh to Community Needs,” *Al-Ahkam* 23, no. 1 (2022), <https://doi.org/10.15548/alahkam.v13i1.4439>.

<sup>28</sup> S. Wandī, “Eksistensi ‘Urf dan Adat Kebiasaan sebagai Dalil Fiqih,” *Jurnal Hukum Keluarga dan Hukum Islam* 2, no. 1 (2018): 181–196, <https://doi.org/10.22373/sjkh.v2i1.3111>.

<sup>29</sup> Fitriani, L., L. S. Anditya, M. Saniyyah, N. N. Sari, and I. Nur, “Eksistensi dan Kehujjahan ‘Urf sebagai Sumber Istinbāt Hukum,” *Al-Hikmah: Jurnal Studi Agama-Agama* 7, no. 2 (2021): 246–256, <http://dx.doi.org/10.30651/ah.v7i2.8088>.

<sup>30</sup> S. A. Sarjana and I. K. Suratman, “Konsep ‘Urf dalam Penetapan Hukum Islam,” *Tsaqafah: Jurnal Peradaban Islam* 13, no. 2 (2017): 279–296, <https://doi.org/10.21111/tsaqafah.v13i2.1509>.



to the higher objectives of Sharī'ah and is not misused to legitimize harmful or unjust practices.<sup>31</sup>

Scholars further classify *'urf* into two principal categories: *'urf ṣaḥīḥ* (valid custom) and *'urf fāsid* (invalid custom). *'Urf ṣaḥīḥ* refers to customs that are socially accepted and consistent with Sharī'ah principles, particularly in promoting justice, benefit, and social harmony.<sup>16</sup> Such customs may serve as a legitimate basis for legal reasoning. In contrast, *'urf fāsid* denotes customs that, although prevalent, contradict Islamic legal principles and may involve elements of coercion, injustice, or harm.<sup>32</sup> These customs cannot be recognized as legal proof and must be critically evaluated or even abandoned.

In contemporary discourse, the role of *'urf* continues to evolve alongside societal transformation, including in the context of modern socio-economic dynamics and emerging legal challenges.<sup>33</sup> This reinforces the need for continuous reassessment of customary practices to ensure their alignment with the foundational objectives of Islamic law (*maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*).

In sum, the doctrine of *'urf* reflects a dynamic balance between normative revelation and social reality in Islamic jurisprudence. It affirms that while Islamic law is context-sensitive and adaptive, all customs must ultimately conform to the principles of justice, mutual consent, and public benefit (*maṣlaḥah*).<sup>34</sup>

#### **An Overview of The *Deleh Mendeleh* Tradition in Sukowati Village**

The *buwuhan* tradition, locally known in Sukowati Village as *deleh mendeleh*, is not merely a ritual element of wedding ceremonies but a lived social practice embedded in the everyday life of the community. During wedding events, neighbors come quietly to the host's house bringing various household necessities such as rice, sugar, cooking oil, or other practical goods. These items are not formally handed over; instead, they are discreetly placed inside the house, often without direct interaction with the host. As one informant explained, "we usually come quietly, leave what we bring in the kitchen or inside the house, and then go home without making it known."<sup>35</sup> This understated manner of giving reflects a cultural emphasis on sincerity, humility, and the avoidance of ostentation.

Within the social fabric of Sukowati Village, *deleh mendeleh* forms an integral part of every wedding ceremony. Participation is widespread and often taken for granted as part of communal responsibility. One informant noted, "it has always been like this when someone has a wedding, we all come to help,"<sup>36</sup> indicating that the practice is deeply

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<sup>31</sup> Kasuwi Saiban, *Metode Penetapan Hukum Islam: Membangun Mazhab Fiqih Kontemporer di Indonesia* (Malang: Setara Press, 2019).

<sup>32</sup> D. Putri, "Konsep 'Urf sebagai Sumber Hukum dalam Islam," *El-Mashlahah* 10, no. 2 (2020): 14–25, <https://doi.org/10.23971/maslahah.v10i2.1911>.

<sup>33</sup> A. Wahyuni and Harisah, "Konsep Al-'Urf dalam Perkembangan Society 5.0 Perspektif Fiqih Kontemporer," *Ulumuna: Jurnal Studi Keislaman* 9, no. 1 (2023), <https://doi.org/10.36420/ju.v9i1.6694>.

<sup>34</sup> W. Susanty and T. Anggraini, "Peranan 'Urf dan Adat dalam Pembentukan Hukum Islam dan Implikasinya terhadap Ekonomi Syariah," *Jurnal Ilmiah Manajemen, Ekonomi dan Akuntansi* 5, no. 1 (2025): 119–128, <https://doi.org/10.55606/jurimea.v5i1.895>.

<sup>35</sup> Interview with Informant I2 (housewife, 42 years old), Sukowati Village, 2025.

<sup>36</sup> Interview with Informant I8 (religious figure, 52 years old), Sukowati Village, 2025.



rooted in inherited social norms. At the same time, other informants acknowledged that participation is not entirely free from expectation. As expressed by another participant, “even without written rules, it feels like an obligation,”<sup>37</sup> while others admitted that not participating would create discomfort in social relationships.<sup>38</sup> These testimonies suggest that *deleh mendeleh* operates simultaneously as both a moral value and a social expectation.

A distinctive feature of the contemporary practice is the systematic recording of contributions. Families hosting wedding ceremonies commonly document who contributed and the value of each contribution. One informant stated, “everything is written down, so later we know what to return,”<sup>39</sup> while another emphasized that such records help maintain a sense of fairness within the community.<sup>40</sup> This practice transforms what appears to be a voluntary act of giving into a structured system of reciprocity, where each contribution carries an implicit expectation of future return.

This transformation becomes more evident when considering the experiences of community members. While some still perceive *deleh mendeleh* as a form of mutual assistance, others experience it as a source of economic pressure. One informant explained, “after receiving a lot, we feel pressured because we have to return it later, even when our finances are limited,”<sup>41</sup> while another admitted that “sometimes we have to force ourselves to repay, even when it is difficult.”<sup>42</sup> These accounts indicate that the expectation of reciprocity may impose a financial burden, particularly on households with limited economic resources.

Furthermore, although repayment is often described as flexible in principle, empirical observations reveal that such flexibility is not always realized in practice. In situations of economic hardship, repayment is still socially anticipated. One informant stated, “even if we are struggling financially, people still expect us to repay,”<sup>43</sup> while another noted that failure to do so may lead to social consequences, such as gossip or negative judgments from neighbors.<sup>44</sup> These responses illustrate the operation of informal social control mechanisms that subtly compel individuals to conform to communal expectations.

Taken together, these findings demonstrate that *deleh mendeleh* embodies a dual character. On the one hand, it serves as a meaningful expression of mutual assistance, social empathy, and communal solidarity. On the other hand, it functions as a structured system of reciprocity that may generate economic strain and moral pressure. This duality reflects a broader process of social institutionalization, in which a practice originally grounded in voluntary generosity gradually acquires obligatory characteristics through collective expectations and shared social norms.

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<sup>37</sup> Interview with Informant I1 (community leader, 50 years old), Sukowati Village, 2025.

<sup>38</sup> Interview with Informant I9 (local resident, 40 years old), Sukowati Village, 2025.

<sup>39</sup> Interview with Informant I3 (wedding host, 39 years old), Sukowati Village, 2025.

<sup>40</sup> Interview with Informant I4 (local resident, 47 years old), Sukowati Village, 2025.

<sup>41</sup> Interview with Informant I5 (head of family, 45 years old), Sukowati Village, 2025.

<sup>42</sup> Interview with Informant I10 (informal worker, 38 years old), Sukowati Village, 2025.

<sup>43</sup> Interview with Informant I7 (housewife, 36 years old), Sukowati Village, 2025.

<sup>44</sup> Interview with Informant I6 (private employee, 44 years old), Sukowati Village, 2025.



Understanding this transformation is essential for assessing the contemporary relevance of *deleh mendeleh*. While the preservation of cultural heritage remains an important communal value, maintaining the ethical substance of the tradition requires ensuring that its implementation does not undermine the principles of voluntariness and compassion that initially defined it. The sustainability of *deleh mendeleh* as a social institution ultimately depends on balancing reciprocity with genuine mutual care, so that solidarity remains its primary foundation rather than social compulsion.

### **An ‘Urf Analysis of The *Deleh Mendeleh* Reciprocity Tradition**

From the perspective of ‘urf, the culture of *deleh mendeleh* may, in principle, be categorized as ‘urf *ṣaḥīḥ*, as it constitutes a custom that is widely practiced, socially accepted, and historically embedded within the community. Its primary orientation is the strengthening of social solidarity. The central values embodied in this tradition *ta‘āwun* (mutual assistance) and *ṣilaturrahīm* (the maintenance of social bonds) are consistent with Islamic teachings that emphasize cooperation in goodness, as reflected in QS. al-Mā'idah (5): 2. This aligns with previous studies which affirm that the principle of mutual assistance (*ta‘āwun*) constitutes a fundamental ethical foundation in Islamic social relations.<sup>45</sup> Within this normative framework, *deleh mendeleh* may properly be classified as ‘urf *ṣaḥīḥ* when it functions as sincere and voluntary assistance aimed at easing the financial burden of families organizing wedding ceremonies.

However, empirical findings indicate that this ideal form is not consistently realized in practice. While some community members continue to perceive the tradition as voluntary, others experience it as a social obligation. As one informant stated, “even without written rules, it feels like an obligation,”<sup>46</sup> suggesting that the element of voluntariness (*riḍā*) is often compromised. This phenomenon reflects what has been identified in previous research on *buwuhan*, where practices of giving gradually shift into socially binding expectations resembling informal debt relations.<sup>47</sup>

Normatively, reciprocity within *deleh mendeleh* should be grounded in mutual consent, as emphasized in QS. al-Nisā' (4): 29. However, field data reveal that reciprocity is reinforced not only by moral values but also by social mechanisms. The systematic recording of contributions, for instance, plays a crucial role in shaping expectations. As one informant explained, “everything is recorded so that it can be returned later,”<sup>48</sup> indicating a transformation of the practice into a structured system of exchange. Similar findings have been documented in other studies, which highlight that *buwuhan* often

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<sup>45</sup> Albahri, Kurniati, A., and Pasiska, “Prinsip Tolong-Menolong dalam Islam (Eksplorasi dalam Ayat Al-Qur'an, Sirah Nabawiyah dan Piagam Madinah),” *El-Ghiroh: Jurnal Studi Keislaman* 21, no. 2 (2023): 145–163, <https://doi.org/10.37092/el-ghiroh.v21i2.613>.

<sup>46</sup> Interview with Informant I1, Sukowati Village, 2025.

<sup>47</sup> S. A. Rachmawati and M. K. Anwar, “Budaya dan Tradisi Buwuh sebagai Hutang Piutang dalam Adat Pernikahan di Kota Surabaya,” *Jurnal Ekonomika dan Bisnis Islam* 4, no. 3 (2021): 69–83, <https://doi.org/10.26740/jekobi.v4n3.p69-83>.

<sup>48</sup> Interview with Informant I3, Sukowati Village, 2025.



functions as a form of “social accounting” or implicit financial arrangement within Javanese communities.<sup>49</sup>

A concrete case further illustrates this transformation. One informant (I5) reported that during a wedding ceremony, the family received contributions ranging from IDR 50,000 to IDR 500,000 per contributor. While initially helpful, these contributions created a perceived obligation to reciprocate in the future. The informant stated that “after receiving a large amount, we felt burdened because we had to return it later, even when our financial condition was unstable.”<sup>50</sup> This case demonstrates that *deleh mendeleh* may operate not only as social support but also as a form of informal financial commitment. Such patterns have also been observed in other regions, where *buwuhan* is interpreted as a socio-economic mechanism that intertwines solidarity with material calculation.<sup>51</sup>

From a legal perspective, this transformation raises concerns regarding the violation of the principle *lā ḍarar wa lā ḍirār* (no harm and no reciprocating harm). Several informants reported that repayment expectations persist even under conditions of hardship. One participant noted that “even if we are struggling financially, people still expect us to repay,”<sup>52</sup> while another stated that failure to do so may result in gossip or negative social judgment.<sup>53</sup> These findings demonstrate the operation of informal social control mechanisms that subtly compel individuals to conform to communal expectations. This aligns with previous studies showing that social sanctions, although informal, play a significant role in maintaining reciprocity within traditional practices.<sup>54</sup>

Accordingly, when *deleh mendeleh* is practiced voluntarily and oriented toward *maṣlahah*, it remains within the category of *‘urf ṣaḥīḥ* and aligns with the objectives of Shari‘ah. However, when the practice evolves into a binding obligation accompanied by economic pressure and social sanctions, it tends toward *‘urf fāsid*, as it introduces elements of coercion and harm. This distinction is consistent with the broader theoretical framework of *‘urf*, which recognizes that the legal validity of custom is contingent upon its conformity with principles of justice, consent, and public benefit.<sup>55</sup>

The transformation of *deleh mendeleh* thus reflects a broader process of social institutionalization. Initially grounded in voluntary generosity, the tradition has gradually acquired structured and quasi-contractual characteristics through collective expectations and practices of documentation. In this context, *deleh mendeleh* may function pragmatically as a system of informal risk-sharing or social investment, particularly in

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<sup>49</sup> R. Permanasari and N. A. Utomo, “Mental Accounting: The Meaning of ‘Buwuhan’ in Javanese Wedding Tradition: An Ethnographic Study,” *Jurnal Riset Akuntansi Kontemporer* 17, no. 1 (2025): 211–225, <https://doi.org/10.23969/jrak.v17i2.22923>.

<sup>50</sup> Interview with Informant I5, Sukowati Village, 2025.

<sup>51</sup> A. Fadilah, “Jejaring Tali Silaturahmi: Makna Hutang pada Budaya dan Tradisi Buwuhan di Desa Slempit, Dusun Lingsir,” *Journal of Culture Accounting and Auditing* 3, no. 1 (2024): 53–65, <https://doi.org/10.30587/jcaa.v3i1.7697>.

<sup>52</sup> Interview with Informant I7, Sukowati Village, 2025.

<sup>53</sup> Interview with Informant I6, Sukowati Village, 2025.

<sup>54</sup> C. Fadil, Zawawi, and M. Alawi, “Pesan Akhlak melalui Perspektif Al-Qardh dalam Tradisi Buwuh Pernikahan di Daerah Nganjuk,” *Jurnal Ilmiah Ilmu Pendidikan* 7, no. 4 (2024): 3972–3978, <https://doi.org/10.54371/jiip.v7i4.4269>.

<sup>55</sup> W. Syarvina, “Aplikasi ‘Urf dalam Ekonomi Islam,” *At-Tijarah: Jurnal Penelitian Keuangan dan Perbankan Syariah* 4, no. 1 (2022): 1–16, <https://doi.org/10.52490/attijarah.v4i1.285>.



communities with limited economic resources.<sup>56</sup> Nevertheless, when such practices generate economic burden or social exclusion, their ethical foundation becomes compromised.

Therefore, from the standpoint of Islamic law, the acceptability of *deleh mendeleh* must be understood as conditional. The tradition remains valid insofar as it functions as a non-binding moral commitment grounded in sincerity, voluntariness, and public benefit. Conversely, when it generates harm whether in the form of economic hardship, moral coercion, or social pressure reinterpretation and reconstruction of the custom (*i'ādah taqyīm al-'urf*) become necessary. Such reconstruction aims to restore the tradition to its original ethical foundation as a form of mutual assistance that promotes justice (*'adl*), benefit (*maṣlahah*), and compassion (*rahmah*).

Ultimately, this analysis demonstrates that Islamic jurisprudence provides a dynamic evaluative framework through which living traditions may be critically assessed. The case of *deleh mendeleh* illustrates that *'urf* is not static but subject to continuous reinterpretation in response to evolving social realities.

## CONCLUSION

The findings of this study demonstrate that the *deleh mendeleh* tradition in Sukowati Village has undergone a significant transformation from a voluntary form of mutual assistance into a socially structured system of reciprocity. Empirical evidence shows that the use of systematic record-keeping and expectations of equivalent repayment has contributed to the emergence of social pressure and, in some cases, economic burden, particularly among lower-income families. These findings indicate that the practice is no longer uniformly experienced as an act of solidarity, but also as a form of implicit social obligation. From the perspective of *'urf*, this transformation reflects a shift from *'urf ṣaḥīḥ* toward *'urf fāsid*, as the elements of voluntariness and mutual consent (*riḍā*) are increasingly undermined by social expectations and informal sanctions. This study thus highlights that *'urf* is not a static concept, but is subject to processes of social institutionalization that may alter its legal and ethical status over time.

Theoretically, this research contributes to the discourse of *uṣūl al-fiqh* by demonstrating the importance of continuously reassessing local customs in light of their evolving social context. Practically, it recommends that community practices be reoriented toward their original ethical foundation by reducing rigid record-keeping mechanisms and minimizing social pressure in reciprocal exchanges. Accordingly, the sustainability of *deleh mendeleh* as a cultural tradition depends on its ability to preserve voluntariness, fairness, and public benefit, in line with the fundamental principles of Islamic law.

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<sup>56</sup> A. Fadilah, "Jejaring Tali Silaturahmi: Makna Hutang pada Budaya dan Tradisi Buwahan di Desa Slempit, Dusun Lingsir," *Journal of Culture Accounting and Auditing* 3, no. 1 (2024): 53–65, <https://doi.org/10.30587/jcaa.v3i1.7697>.



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