Kokoda Traditional Marriage In Sorong City: An Islamic Law Perspective

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Abstract.
Traditional marriage remains an important part of the cultural and social life of the Kokoda community in Sorong City, Southwest Papua, Indonesia. Customary procedures strengthen family relationships, regulate social obligations, and preserve cultural identity. However, customary recognition raises questions about its relationship with Islamic marriage requirements, particularly the marriage contract and mahr. This study examines the forms and stages of Kokoda traditional marriage, the social functions of customary practices, and their position under Islamic law. It employs qualitative fieldwork with sociological-empirical and normative juridical approaches. Data were collected through interviews with a customary leader as the principal informant and other informants as supporting sources, alongside observation and documentation. The data were analyzed through reduction, presentation, and conclusion drawing, then assessed using Islamic marriage principles and the concept of 'urf. The findings show that Kokoda traditional marriage involves family deliberation, discussions of mas kawin, customary ceremonies, and recognition by customary authorities. These practices strengthen family ties, regulate customary responsibilities, and sustain cultural continuity. Under Islamic law, customary practices may be maintained when they do not contradict Islamic principles or infringe individual rights. However, customary recognition cannot replace the Islamic marriage contract, and reciprocal marriage arrangements cannot automatically substitute for the wife's entitlement to mahr. The study concludes that preserving Kokoda traditions should go hand in hand with fulfilling Islamic marriage requirements and protecting spouses' rights.
Keywords: *Customary Marriage; Islamic Law; Kokoda Community; Mahr and 'Urf.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Marriage is an important institution that regulates the relationship between spouses and establishes connections between families and the wider community. In Indonesia, marriage is shaped by religious teachings, state regulations, and customary traditions that have developed within different cultural communities. For Muslim communities, marriage is not merely a social ceremony but also a legal and religious institution that entails rights and obligations for both spouses. At the same time, customary practices continue to influence how families negotiate marriage arrangements, conduct ceremonies, and recognize marital relationships within their communities. Understanding these practices requires attention to both their social significance and their relationship with the principles of Islamic law.

The relationship between customary law and Islamic law is particularly important in communities where marriage traditions remain closely connected to family authority and collective identity. Customary rules may regulate the involvement of relatives, the exchange of marriage-related goods, ceremonial procedures, and the recognition of a couple by the community. Islamic legal thought also recognizes the role of custom through the concept of *'urf*, provided that the relevant custom does not contradict established legal principles. Accordingly, customary practices should not be accepted or rejected solely because they originate in local traditions. Their legal implications must be examined in relation to the specific practice involved and the Islamic rules governing marriage, including the marriage contract and the rights of the spouses.

This issue is relevant to the Kokoda community in Sorong City, Southwest Papua, where customary traditions continue to play a role in social and religious life. Research by Jubba et al. (2024) examines the interaction between Islamic practices and customary traditions among Kokoda Muslims in Papua, including marriage practices. Their study provides an important contextual foundation for understanding how the community negotiates religious commitments and customary expectations. However, the forms and stages of customary marriage, the social functions of particular customary arrangements, and the legal implications of those arrangements require focused examination. In particular, it is necessary to distinguish between the community's customary recognition of a couple and the fulfillment of the requirements of an Islamic marriage.

The present study focuses on three questions. First, what are the forms and stages of traditional marriage among the Kokoda community in Sorong City? Second, what are the position and social functions of custom in the implementation of these marriages? Third, how should Kokoda traditional marriage practices be assessed from the perspective of Islamic law? These questions are connected because a description of customary procedures alone cannot establish their legal status. The discussion must also consider the function of each practice and whether it is consistent with Islamic marriage requirements. Particular attention is given to *mas kawin*, including customary goods and reciprocal marriage arrangements, because their social meaning may differ from the legal meaning of *mahr* in Islamic law.

Previous studies have examined the interaction between customary traditions and Islamic law in various Indonesian communities. Khusairi and Mandala (2023) analyzed customary marriage in Kerinci from the perspective of Islamic law, while Jubba et al. (2024) examined the interaction between Islamic practices and customary traditions among Muslim communities in Papua, including the Kokoda community. Research on other customary communities has also demonstrated that the relationship between adat and Islamic law involves continuing negotiation between cultural authority and religious norms. Bukido et al. (2022), for example, examined the harmonization of customary and Islamic law in the Gama tradition of the Muslim Mongondow community. Similarly, Saiin et al. (2023) explored the role of Islamic values in Malay marriage traditions in the Riau Islands. More recent studies have continued to examine how customary marriage practices are interpreted and negotiated in relation to Islamic legal principles (Alfarisi et al., 2025; Sulistio et al., 2026). Taken together, these studies demonstrate that customary marriage practices should be assessed in their specific social and legal contexts rather than treated as uniformly compatible or incompatible with Islamic law.

Building on this literature, the present study focuses on the forms and stages of traditional marriage among the Kokoda community in Sorong City, the social position and functions of customary practices, and their assessment under Islamic law. Its contribution lies in connecting empirical accounts of Kokoda marriage procedures with a focused analysis of customary recognition, *mas kawin*, the Islamic marriage contract, and the wife's entitlement to *mahr*. This distinction is particularly important because a customary practice may preserve cultural identity and strengthen family relationships without necessarily fulfilling every requirement of an Islamic marriage. The study therefore seeks to explain both the social significance of Kokoda traditional marriage and the legal limits within which its practices may be maintained.

II. Methods

Research Design and Approaches

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research design to examine traditional marriage practices among the Kokoda community in Sorong City, Southwest Papua, Indonesia. A qualitative design was selected because the research sought to understand customary procedures, the meanings attached to those procedures, and the ways in which customary practices are recognized within the community. The study combined a sociological-empirical approach with a normative juridical approach. The sociological-empirical approach was used to investigate marriage practices and the perspectives of community members, while the normative juridical approach was used to assess the findings in relation to Islamic marriage law.

Research Location and Informants

The research was conducted in Sorong City, where the Kokoda community maintains customary traditions as part of its social and cultural life. The principal informant was Idris Ugaje, the Kokoda customary leader, whose account provided the main description of the customary marriage process. Other informants, including community members and individuals with experience of customary marriage, were used to support and contextualize the principal informant's account. Information from religious and marriage-related institutions was also considered where relevant to the research questions.

The informants were selected purposively on the basis of their knowledge, roles, or direct experience concerning Kokoda traditional marriage. The study did not aim to produce statistically representative findings; rather, it sought to develop a contextual understanding of the practices under investigation. The

number of informants and the details of each interview should be reported in the final manuscript in accordance with the verified fieldwork records.

Data Collection

Data were collected through in-depth semi-structured interviews, field observation, and documentation. Interviews explored the stages of customary marriage, the involvement of families and customary authorities, the forms of *mas kawin* or marriage-related contributions, the social recognition of couples, and informants' understandings of the relationship between customary practices and Islamic marriage requirements. Observation was used to understand the social context in which customary traditions operate. Documentation and relevant literature provided supplementary material for examining the empirical findings in relation to Islamic legal principles.

The data collection process followed the ethical principle of respecting informants and their community. Interview information was used to represent informants' accounts as accurately as possible. Statements attributed to particular informants were distinguished from the researcher's interpretation, and documentary evidence was not treated as conclusive unless it was actually available and verified.

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The data were analyzed descriptively through three stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. During data reduction, interview notes, observations, and documentary materials were selected and organized according to the three research questions. During data presentation, the findings were arranged thematically to explain the forms and stages of customary marriage, the position and functions of custom, and the relationship between customary practices and Islamic marriage law. In the final stage, conclusions were drawn by comparing the empirical findings with relevant Islamic legal principles, particularly the requirements of the marriage contract, the rights associated with *mahr*, and the concept of *'urf*.

The normative analysis distinguished between customary practices that function as cultural or social arrangements and practices that may affect the fulfillment of Islamic marriage requirements. This distinction provided the basis for assessing whether particular customs could be maintained without contradicting Islamic legal principles.

Forms and Stages of Kokoda Traditional Marriage

Traditional marriage among the Kokoda community in Sorong City involves family deliberation, the determination of *mas kawin*, customary procedures, and recognition by customary authorities. These elements demonstrate that marriage is not understood solely as a relationship between two individuals but also as a matter involving their respective families and the wider community. The customary leader plays an important role in facilitating agreements, overseeing customary obligations, and providing recognition within the customary institution.

Based on the account of Idris Ugaje, the Kokoda customary leader interviewed on 23 May 2026, customary marriage involves the consideration of both parties, agreement between their families, the settlement or discussion of *mas kawin*, and a customary process through which the couple is recognized. Family deliberation is important because it provides a setting for discussing the proposed marriage and the obligations associated with it. The customary institution helps coordinate these discussions and provides a recognized framework for reaching an agreement.

One important element of the process is *mas kawin*. In the traditional practice described by the informants, it may consist of valuable goods such as plates, jars, machetes, spears, axes, and clothing. These items carry economic and social significance because they represent an agreed contribution within the marriage arrangement. Harun Fatagar, who had direct experience of customary marriage, explained that traditional contributions could include large quantities of plates and jars, with their monetary equivalent calculated according to the value of the goods. His interview on 19 July 2026 indicates that money has also become a means of valuing or fulfilling customary contributions.

The timing of the customary contribution may depend on the agreement reached by the parties. Ibrahim Tanebe, a Kokoda community figure interviewed on 8 April 2026, described a practice in which a

customary procedure involving tobacco could take place before the remaining property or contribution was delivered. This account indicates that the customary process and the fulfillment of material obligations do not necessarily occur at the same time. The important point for understanding the practice is that the parties negotiate their obligations within a customary framework, although the legal status of each obligation must be assessed separately under Islamic law.

Customary ceremonies may also include symbolic acts and shared food, including papeda, as well as the use of tobacco or other customary objects. These elements contribute to the social and cultural meaning of the marriage process. They should not, however, be understood as a single fixed sequence that must be identical in every family. The findings identify recurring elements of Kokoda traditional marriage, while allowing for differences in the particular ceremonies and arrangements used by families.

The customary process concludes with recognition by customary authorities. Idris Ugaje explained that after the relevant discussions and customary obligations have been addressed, the couple may be formally recognized through a customary procedure. Ibrahim Tanebe also described how the completion of the customary process allows the families and community to regard the couple as a family unit. This recognition has practical significance because it establishes the couple's social position within the community. Nevertheless, customary recognition and the fulfillment of Islamic marriage requirements are two distinct matters. The social conclusion of a customary ceremony does not by itself establish that an Islamic marriage contract has taken place.

The Position and Social Functions of Custom in Kokoda Marriage

Custom occupies an important position in the marriage practices of the Kokoda community. It provides an institutional framework for family deliberation, the settlement of customary obligations, the conduct of ceremonies, and the recognition of couples. The customary leader and the families involved help organize the process and maintain a degree of continuity between established traditions and contemporary community life. The significance of custom therefore extends beyond ceremonial activities.

The first function of custom is to strengthen relationships between families. Marriage creates connections not only between the prospective spouses but also between their relatives. Family deliberation and agreement provide opportunities for the parties to discuss expectations and responsibilities before the customary process is completed. The negotiation of *mas kawin* and other customary obligations also provides a recognized means of reaching agreement between the families.

The second function is to provide social recognition. When a couple has completed the customary process, the community may recognize their relationship and treat them as a family unit. This recognition is important within the local social environment because it signals that the families have reached an agreement and that the customary procedures have been fulfilled. The authority attached to customary recognition is therefore primarily social and customary. It should not automatically be equated with legal validity under Islamic law or state marriage regulations.

The third function is to regulate responsibilities and provide a setting for addressing problems. Through customary deliberation, families and customary authorities can discuss outstanding contributions, disagreements, and other issues associated with the marriage process. Such arrangements help maintain communication between the parties and provide a culturally familiar mechanism for handling family matters. Their effectiveness depends on the willingness of the parties to participate and on the nature of the problem being addressed.

The fourth function is cultural continuity. Customary marriage provides a means of transmitting traditions and customary knowledge to younger generations. At the same time, the form of its implementation may change as the community adapts to contemporary circumstances. Idris Ugaje's account indicates that goods traditionally used as *mas kawin* may increasingly be valued or replaced through monetary arrangements. This development illustrates how customary practices can retain their social meaning while their material forms change.

The findings thus show that Kokoda traditional marriage serves several interconnected functions: strengthening family relationships, organizing customary responsibilities, providing social recognition, facilitating the resolution of certain disagreements, and preserving cultural identity. These functions help

explain why custom remains meaningful to the community. However, the strength of customary authority in social life does not mean that every customary practice automatically satisfies the requirements of Islamic law. Its social function and its legal implications must be examined separately.

The social role of customary marriage among the Kokoda community is consistent with broader research on the relationship between adat and Islamic law in Indonesia. Studies of the Gama tradition among the Muslim Mongondow community and Malay marriage traditions in the Riau Islands demonstrate that customary practices can remain socially meaningful while being interpreted in relation to Islamic values (Bukido et al., 2022; Saiin et al., 2023). Research on other Indonesian customary communities likewise shows that the interaction between adat and Islam requires attention to the specific content and consequences of each practice (Alfarisi et al., 2025; Sulistio et al., 2026). In the Kokoda context, this means that family deliberation, customary ceremonies, and social recognition should be examined according to their particular functions. Their value in maintaining community relationships does not, by itself, determine whether every associated practice meets the requirements of Islamic marriage law.

An Islamic Law Assessment of Kokoda Traditional Marriage

The assessment of Kokoda traditional marriage under Islamic law requires a distinction between customary practices that support family and community life and practices that may conflict with Islamic legal requirements. The concept of *'urf* provides a useful framework for distinguishing acceptable customary practices from those that conflict with Islamic legal requirements. Sudrajat et al. (2023), in their study of the Nemokke tradition in Javanese marriage, demonstrate how a local tradition can be assessed according to its compatibility with Islamic principles. This approach is relevant to Kokoda traditional marriage because customary practices should be evaluated individually rather than accepted or rejected solely on the basis of their cultural origin. In this context, the use of *'urf* does not mean that every established custom automatically becomes an acceptable legal consideration. Its acceptability depends on whether the practice is consistent with Islamic legal principles and whether it protects the rights of the individuals concerned. This distinction allows the analysis to recognize the cultural significance of Kokoda marriage traditions while critically examining particular practices that may affect the fulfillment of marriage requirements or the wife's entitlement to *mahr*. Family deliberation and customary ceremonies may retain their social and cultural value, provided that they do not replace the requirements of an Islamic marriage or undermine the rights of the spouses. The analysis should also distinguish Islamic legal validity from the requirements of Indonesian marriage law, including the applicable statutory framework under Law No. 1 of 1974, as amended by Law No. 16 of 2019.

Family deliberation, customary ceremonies, the use of symbolic objects, and the exchange of goods may be maintained as cultural practices provided that they do not violate Islamic principles or infringe the rights of the parties. Such practices can strengthen relationships and provide meaningful expressions of community identity. In this respect, customary marriage procedures may be understood as forms of *'urf* that are compatible with Islamic law when their implementation remains within the limits established by the Sharia.

A central issue is the distinction between customary recognition and an Islamic marriage contract. Under Islamic marriage law, the fulfillment of the relevant requirements, including the presence of the required parties, a marriage guardian (*wali*), witnesses, and *ijab* and *qabul* in accordance with the applicable rules, is distinct from the completion of a customary ceremony. Customary deliberation and approval may complement the marriage process, but they cannot independently substitute for the required marriage contract. Therefore, a couple's recognition as married under customary practice should not, by itself, be treated as proof that the marriage has fulfilled Islamic legal requirements.

The issue of *mas kawin* also requires careful consideration. Customary goods such as plates, jars, tools, clothing, or other valuable items may be used as *mahr* when the arrangement satisfies the applicable Islamic legal requirements and the woman's entitlement is respected. The use of goods rather than money does not, by itself, make a contribution inconsistent with Islamic law. However, customary contributions to the bride's family must be distinguished from *mahr*, which is the wife's right. A customary obligation paid to relatives or another party does not automatically replace the woman's entitlement to *mahr*.

A particularly important finding concerns *perkawinan silang*, or reciprocal marriage arrangements between two families. Idris Kailoro, a parent of a person involved in customary marriage, described a case in which two families arranged marriages between two pairs of siblings. In his account, a separate *mahr* was initially not provided because the reciprocal arrangement was understood to serve as its substitute. He explained: "Aa tidak usah, silang-silang sama-sama perempuan. Aa itu sudah maharnya" (Idris Kailoro, personal interview, 15 August 2026). This statement reflects the understanding expressed in that particular case; it should not be generalized to all Kokoda marriages.

From an Islamic legal perspective, reciprocal marriage arrangements should not be considered prohibited merely because two families arrange marriages with each other. The decisive question is whether each marriage is independent and whether the rights of each spouse are respected. The legal concern arises when one marriage is made conditional upon another in a way that turns the women into reciprocal consideration or eliminates their entitlement to *mahr*. This concern is related to the prohibition of *nikāḥ al-shighār*, discussed in the hadith literature, including Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, hadith no. 1415. The specific legal assessment must therefore focus on the conditions and consequences of the arrangement rather than on the existence of reciprocal marriages alone.

The case described by Idris Kailoro illustrates why the distinction matters. According to his account, the reciprocal arrangement was initially understood as replacing *mas kawin*. The subsequent breakdown of one couple's relationship while the other couple continued together led the families to discuss the question of the contribution again. This situation demonstrates that a reciprocal marriage arrangement may raise questions about the independence of each marriage and the rights attached to it. It also shows why customary agreements should be assessed in light of the rights of each individual rather than solely through the interests of the two families.

A further distinction concerns customary recognition, Islamic legal validity, and state registration. These are related matters, but they should not be treated as interchangeable. Recognition by customary authorities demonstrates the social position of a couple within the community, while Islamic legal validity depends on the fulfillment of the applicable requirements of marriage. State registration, meanwhile, concerns the formal recording of the marriage under Indonesian law. Because the available evidence does not establish the registration status of every couple involved in Kokoda customary marriage, this study does not conclude that all such marriages are unregistered. Further research based on verified individual marriage records would help clarify the relationship between customary procedures, Islamic marriage requirements, and state registration.

Overall, the findings support a qualified assessment of Kokoda traditional marriage under Islamic law. Customary procedures that strengthen family relationships, preserve cultural identity, and regulate social responsibilities may be maintained when they do not contradict Islamic principles. However, customary recognition cannot replace the Islamic marriage contract, and a reciprocal marriage arrangement cannot automatically be treated as a substitute for *mahr*. The relationship between custom and Islamic law is therefore best understood through a distinction between the social legitimacy of customary practices and their compliance with the legal requirements of marriage.

IV. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that traditional marriage among the Kokoda community in Sorong City involves family deliberation, the determination of *mas kawin*, customary ceremonies, and recognition by customary authorities. These practices strengthen relationships between families, regulate customary responsibilities, provide social recognition, and preserve cultural traditions. Custom therefore retains an important social position in the community. From the perspective of Islamic law, customary practices may be maintained as forms of *'urf* when they do not contradict Islamic principles or infringe the rights of the spouses. Nevertheless, customary recognition cannot replace the requirements of an Islamic marriage contract. The findings concerning reciprocal marriage arrangements also indicate that such arrangements must be assessed carefully, particularly when one marriage is treated as a substitute for the wife's entitlement

to *mahr*. The study therefore emphasizes that preserving Kokoda cultural traditions should go hand in hand with fulfilling Islamic marriage requirements and protecting the rights of both spouses.

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