

## Bride Kidnapping as a Marriage Tradition: An Examination of Newcomers' Perspectives on *Merariq* in Lombok Island

Nova Apriliani<sup>1\*</sup>, Deviana Mayasari<sup>2</sup>, Aliahardi Winata<sup>1</sup>, Ravindra Ashok Jadhav<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Universitas Muhammadiyah Mataram, Indonesia

<sup>2</sup>Universitas Brawijaya, Indonesia

<sup>3</sup>K.J. Somaiya College of Arts, Commerce and Science, Kopergaon, Maharashtra, India

\*Correspondence:  [novaa022@gmail.com](mailto:novaa022@gmail.com)

### Abstract

The *merariq* tradition constitutes a significant cultural practice prevalent among many members of the Sasak community in Lombok, with historical roots extending back to ancient times. This tradition has been meticulously preserved and conveyed through generations, reflecting the unique cultural heritage of the Sasak people. Within the framework of this research, religious norms pertain to the behavioral regulations that are derived from the sacred texts of various religions. These norms guide followers in their moral and ethical conduct. Conversely, ethical norms are dictated by individual conscience, providing a subjective basis for discerning right from wrong. The primary objective of this study is to examine the perspectives of newcomers visiting Lombok regarding the *merariq* tradition, particularly in relation to established religious and ethical norms within the Sasak community. This research adopts a qualitative methodology, specifically utilizing a descriptive qualitative approach. The findings indicate that, from the viewpoint of these outsiders, the *merariq* tradition does not infringe upon either religious or ethical norms. This conclusion is noteworthy, as it is evident that there are no explicit written regulations within the frameworks of religious or ethical guidelines that directly prohibit the observance of the *merariq* tradition. This understanding underscores the perspective that an action is generally regarded as a violation of established norms only in the presence of clear prohibitory rules. Consequently, for these visitors, the *merariq* tradition is perceived as a respected cultural expression that integrates harmoniously within the broader social and religious context of Lombok.

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## INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is a nation rich in diversity, encompassing a wide array of ethnicities, cultures, traditions, and religions. Particularly in the realm of religion, Indonesia adheres to various norms that guide each believer (Learson, 2019). From the diversity of ethnicities, cultures, and traditions within the country, numerous marriage traditions have emerged. These marriage customs have become integral elements of community life, deeply rooted and passed down through generations (Sassler & Lichter, 2020).

According to John J. Macionis in 1997, as cited by Alhakim (2021), norms can be defined as the rules and expectations of a society that guide the behavior of its members. A. Ridwam Halim suggests that norms are all regulations, whether written or not, essentially serving as guidelines or references that every individual in society must adhere to. Based on the perspectives of these two scholars, norms are interpreted as regulations in the form of ethics, behavioral guidelines, or manners that govern societal behavior. This category of norms can be further subdivided into various types, such as religious norms, ethical norms, norms of decency, legal norms, and so forth (Adrian & Rahaditya, 2022). According to Nursalam & Nugrawati (2018), religious norms are guidelines for life that humans must accept as commands, prohibitions, and teachings directly originating from the Almighty. Religious norms aim to guide humanity in consistently obeying divine commands and abstaining from prohibitions found in their respective religious scriptures. On

the other hand, ethical norms, as stated by Natih et al., (2019), are norms that guide humans to live in accordance with human values or to achieve the perfection of life.

One of the elements that shapes the diversity of a culture is tradition, which also serves as a distinctive characteristic differentiating one region from another. In a simple context, tradition encompasses practices that have endured over time and have become an integral part of the life of a social group, often associated with the same country, culture, period, or religion (Asad, 2015). Tradition can also be defined as a social custom passed down from one generation to the next through a process known as socialization. In the concept of tradition, it is often linked to belief systems, values, as well as patterns and ways of thinking embraced by the community in a particular region (Sari & Priyanto, 2019). Tradition plays a crucial role in shaping the identity and sustainability of a culture. The values, norms, and rituals embedded in traditions form the basis for shaping the characteristics of a society and preserving the cultural heritage from one generation to the next. Tradition is not merely a collection of small practices but also reflects the essence and spirit of a community. Therefore, a profound understanding of tradition is essential for preserving cultural diversity and comprehending the history of a society.

The Sasak people, indigenous inhabitants of Lombok Island in West Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia, exhibit a distinct and unique cultural identity. The cultural richness of the Sasak community is inseparable from the historical development of religions within the local society. Hinduism was the first religion introduced to and practiced on Lombok Island before Islam, which currently stands as the majority religion (Dharmika & Pradana, 2021), (Hauser-Schäublin & Harnish, 2014). The Sasak ethnic group occupies an area of 4,700 square kilometers, distributed across four regencies and one city, namely West Lombok, Central Lombok, East Lombok, North Lombok, and the city of Mataram. Lombok Island accommodates followers of five different religions, including Islam with a population of 2,698,903, Protestant Christianity with 6,404 adherents, Catholic Christianity with 3,452 adherents, Hinduism with 102,988 followers, and Buddhism with 32,805 adherents (Syafuruddin et al., 2022). Nearly every region on Lombok Island exhibits diversity in terms of ethnicity, culture, and traditional customs, each with unique characteristics distinguishing it from other areas. An illustrative example is the Sasak ethnic group on Lombok Island, West Nusa Tenggara, which maintains its unique traditions, such as the *merariq* tradition (Satria et al., 2021).

The tradition of *merariq* stands as a prominent example within the Sasak community, where, if a man wishes to propose to a woman, he would discreetly take her, often during the nighttime. *Merariq* constitutes a part of the marriage process in the Sasak ethnic group (Muhsinin et al., 2022). According to Ahmad Fathan Aniq, the Sasak people interpret *merariq* as a marriage process preceded by abducting or kidnapping a girl before the religious and national legal marriage ceremonies are conducted. The term */merariq/* itself originates from the Sasak language, and there are several opinions regarding its etymology, one of which suggests that it comes from the word */berari/* meaning 'to run', indicating a man taking away a girl to marry her (Al-Hamdani, 2019). In Sasak society, *merariq* is the most common form of marriage (Syahrial Haq et al., 2019). For the Sasak people, *merariq* signifies preserving dignity and portrays the masculine attitude of a Sasak man, as he succeeds in eloping with the girl he loves (Yulianto et al., 2022). On the other hand, the parents of the abducted girl tend to be reluctant to give away their daughter easily if asked conventionally, as they perceive their daughter as a valuable asset. Thus, requesting her hand conventionally is considered seeking something of lesser value (Rohman & Hasyim, 2022).

Despite the cultural significance of *merariq* as an integral part of Sasak identity, this practice has undergone transformations due to evolving social dynamics. From a social perspective, *merariq* raises concerns regarding early marriage, potential conflicts between families, and economic burdens (Ihsan, 2020). Culturally, while the tradition of *merariq* should be preserved, it needs to be adapted to align with modern values to maintain its cultural essence while remaining relevant in contemporary society. However, this practice may conflict with formal legal frameworks, as it could be considered a violation under the Indonesian Criminal Code (KUHP) (Aprianita, 2023).

Economically, *merariq* can impact family finances as the expenses incurred often exceed the family's financial capacity. Therefore, research can play a crucial role in seeking solutions to balance this tradition with the economic conditions of the community. From an educational perspective, the uncontrolled practice of *merariq* can lead to school dropouts, as children are often compelled to marry at a very young age (Mayasari, 2016).

Numerous studies on *merariq* have been conducted, as evidenced by the works of Mahruni & Fajar, (2023), Haslan & Dahlan, (2022), Hamdani & Fauzia, (2022b), Haslan et al., (2022), Komalasari, (2020), Erwinsya et al., (2020), Suwarno, (2019), Sarmini et al., (2018), Hadi et al., (2018), and Rosdiana et al., (2018a). Rosdiana et al. (2018) describe that, from the perspective of the Sasak community, *merariq* is interpreted as the act of taking a girl away from parental supervision, whether with or without the consent of the guardian or parents. Generally, the practice of *merariq* among the Sasak community is carried out as it is part of local customs and traditions. In this context, Islam does not prohibit *merariq* as long as the process adheres to the correct stages and procedures. However, this practice has the potential to yield negative impacts, such as an increase in early marriages. Early marriages can result in various adverse effects due to the lack of readiness, both physically and psychologically. Additionally, *merariq* is susceptible to causing conflicts among the involved parties, especially when there is a lack of consent.

Suwarno (2019) presents an understanding of *kawin culik* 'elopement marriage' in the Sasak community as a process where a man elopes with a girl after prior agreement between the two, without the knowledge of the girl's parents, with the intention of marriage. The series of processes or stages before reaching the marriage involves *mbait/merariq*, *mesejati*, *selabar*, *nuntut wali*, *rebaq pucuk*, *sorong serah aji krame*, and ultimately *nyongkolan*. In the context of the sociology of Islamic law, utilizing the theory of *al-'Urf*, *kawin culik* can be categorized as part of *al-'urf al ṣaḥīḥ*". Komalasari (2020) illustrates that *merariq* serves as a symbol of bravery and self-respect for Sasak men. However, on the flip side, the parents of the Sasak girl who becomes a victim of *kawin culik* tend to display resistance. They may refuse if the request to elope with their daughter is conveyed conventionally (Elmira et al., 2024).

Haslan & Dahlan (2022) argue that the practice of *merariq* among the Sasak community in the village of Rumak has both positive and negative impacts. Positive impacts involve aspects of prestige or authority for women, showcasing a man's chivalry toward women, and playing a role in preserving Sasak culture through generations. On the other hand, negative impacts include the potential for prolonged conflicts, significant time consumption, and the commercialization of the practice. Mahruni & Fajar (2023) explain that the term *kawin culik* in the context of the Sasak community refers to the practice of eloping with a girl with prior agreement without the knowledge of the parents. *Merariq* has become an integral part of Lombok society's tradition and is considered a commendable practice according to Islamic criteria, thus facing no prohibition. The stages in the *merariq* tradition involve *midang*, *merariq*, *beseboq*, *selabar* or *mesejati*, *sorong serah*, and *nyongkolan*.

The *merariq* tradition holds significant importance within the Sasak community, having been practiced since ancient times and passed down through generations (Elmira et al., 2024). Research on this tradition has detailed its various stages and impacts (Mayasari, 2016). However, ongoing debates exist, particularly concerning its alignment with criminal law in Indonesia and societal norms that view the abduction or elopement of a child as contrary to established values. As a subsequent researchers, we intend to explore how outsiders perceive the *merariq* tradition within the Sasak community, focusing on the viewpoints of religious norms and ethical standards.

The *merariq* tradition is a deeply rooted practice within the Sasak community, having been handed down through generations (Mayasari, 2016). While previous research has outlined its various stages and impacts, ongoing discussions persist—especially when considering the implications within Indonesia's criminal law and the ethical concerns surrounding the abduction or elopement with someone else's child, which contradicts societal norms (Elmira et al., 2024). In light of these complexities, this study seeks to examine how newcomers communities outside Lombok

perceive the *merariq* tradition of the Sasak people, particularly from the perspectives of religious and moral values. The research aims to provide insights into the views of non-native residents regarding this longstanding tradition in Lombok. This topic has been selected because, to date, no study has specifically addressed the perspectives of newcomers communities on the *merariq* tradition in Lombok.

Examining the perspectives of migrants on the *merariq* marriage tradition provides valuable insights into the coexistence and interaction of diverse cultural and ethical norms within Lombok's society. As newcomers introduce their values—often influenced by different religious, cultural, and ethical frameworks—their viewpoints can illuminate areas where *merariq* aligns with or diverges from broader societal expectations (Rohman & Hasyim, 2022). This research offers a nuanced understanding of the adaptation and resilience of *merariq* in a multicultural context, highlighting how traditional practices may need to evolve to maintain relevance and harmony in an increasingly pluralistic society.

Neglecting this area of study may result in a range of challenges and misunderstandings. Without the inclusion of migrant voices, there is a risk that the values inherent in *merariq* could be perceived as universally accepted or resistant to external influences, potentially stifling critical discussions surrounding adaptation and inclusivity (Mayasari, 2016). This oversight could foster misunderstandings between the Sasak community and migrants, creating a cultural rift that might lead to increased tension or isolation within the community. Additionally, a lack of engagement with these perspectives may give rise to stereotypes, as cultural practices could be assessed solely based on external assumptions rather than informed insights (Rohman & Hasyim, 2022). Ultimately, this disconnect poses a threat to the social cohesion of Lombok, where both groups must coexist and strive for mutual understanding to cultivate a harmonious society.

This paper offers important contributions to the existing body of research on *merariq* by applying distinctive methodologies, perspectives, and findings that distinguish it from previous studies. Unlike prior research, which predominantly focuses on the views and practices of the indigenous Sasak community, this study highlights the perspectives of newcomers, or migrants, who introduce diverse cultural and ethical norms to Lombok. This shift in emphasis broadens the analytical scope, providing a clearer understanding of how *merariq* is perceived and interpreted by individuals who are not native to the Sasak culture but are integral to Lombok's evolving social fabric. By prioritizing these external viewpoints, this research employs a comparative approach that enables a nuanced exploration of cultural interaction, adaptation, and potential points of contention surrounding *merariq*. This paper offer new insights into the ethical complexities associated with *merariq*, particularly concerning themes of consent, religious norms, and cultural adaptation viewed from an external perspective. Situated within the broader academic discourse on *merariq*, this study does not simply aim to validate existing findings. Rather, it seeks to enhance the understanding of *merariq* by bringing to light often-overlooked perspectives, thereby providing a more nuanced understanding that includes intercultural dynamics and the ethical reevaluations instigated by migration and social change.

## METHODS

In this paper, a qualitative methodology was employed, specifically a descriptive qualitative study (Creswell, 2014). The data is presented in its original narrative form, avoiding any transformation into symbols or numerical values. An ethnographic approach was adopted to gain a deeper understanding of the culture, behaviors, (Martínez, 2024) and perspectives of a group or community from their internal viewpoint (Vanni & Crosby, 2023). Data collection was conducted through direct observation, interviews, and documentation. Observations are conducted to directly examine the *merariq* procession and assess the extent to which respondents understand this tradition and their views on it. Interviews serve as a means of information exchange between individuals, specifically to gather insights into the perspectives of faculty members and migrant students from outside Lombok on the *merariq* tradition within the context of religious and ethical norms.



Informants were selected using purposive sampling. The chosen individuals were those who possessed extensive knowledge pertinent to the research problem. In this study, participants were chosen for their in-depth knowledge and familiarity with essential aspects of the research questions. The participant group consists of two faculty members who have lived in Lombok for a significant period and have witnessed the *merariq* marriage ritual (informants A and B); migrant/newcomer students currently studying in Lombok who possess knowledge of the *merariq* tradition (informants C and D); a local Lombok resident or a participant in the *merariq* ceremony (informant E); a cultural leader (informant F); and a religious figure (informant G). This case study is based in Mataram, specifically at Muhammadiyah University of Mataram, which was selected for its diverse student body. Students come from various regions, including Sumbawa, Bima, Dompu, East Nusa Tenggara, Java, Bali, and other areas. Additionally, observations and interviews pertaining to the *merariq* procession are conducted in the village of Narmada.

Additionally, documentation—in the form of photographs depicting the activities and implementation of the Sasak traditional *merariq* tradition in Narmada village—served as supplementary data to reinforce the research. This study employed qualitative data analysis techniques as outlined by Sugiyono, which encompass four essential stages: data collection, data reduction, data display (presentation), and conclusion drawing (data verification) (Sugiyono, 2013). Through this methodology, the research seeks to provide a nuanced understanding of the perspectives held by lecturers and newcomer students concerning the *merariq* tradition in relation to religious norms and ethical standards. The researcher adopted Miles and Huberman's (1992) analysis theory, as illustrated in Figure 1.

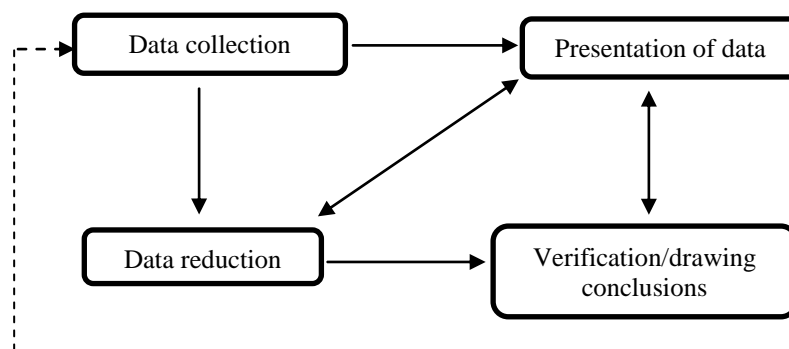


Figure 1. Data Analysis Techniques of Miles and Huberman

Data reduction is the process of summarizing and selecting key elements while emphasizing essential aspects. This entails identifying emerging patterns and themes and removing irrelevant information. The resulting reduced data offers a clearer overview, facilitates ongoing data collection for researchers, and aids in the search for additional relevant information if needed. In qualitative research, data presentation can take various forms, such as concise descriptions, diagrams, relationships between categories, and flowcharts. Typically, narrative text is the predominant format used in presenting qualitative data. The conclusions drawn from qualitative research often unveil new insights that were previously unknown. These findings may include descriptions or representations of subjects that were once vague or poorly understood but become clearer following the research process (Sugiyono, 2013).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Implementation Stages of the *Merariq* Tradition

Religious norms and ethical norms serve as unwritten rules guiding behavior in daily life within a society. Religious norms are based on the sacred scriptures of various faiths and are regarded as directives from the Almighty. These norms provide a strong moral foundation, helping individuals align their lives with the values prescribed by their religion. For example, religious norms often govern aspects of marriage, emphasizing the moral principles that should be observed

throughout the process. In addition to religious norms, ethical norms play an essential role in shaping everyday conduct. These norms stem from an individual's conscience and consist of rules of behavior based on their personal moral values and ethics.

In the context of the *merariq* tradition among the Sasak people on Lombok Island, both religious and ethical norms significantly influence perspectives and actions related to this marriage practice (Hotimah & Widodo, 2021b). A religious leader, identified as informant G, emphasized that:

In the *merariq* tradition, religious values are of paramount importance. Marriage is not merely a social bond; it is a commitment that must be upheld in accordance with moral principles. We consistently remind the community to ensure that this tradition aligns with religious teachings, honors cultural customs, and maintains standards of decency and family dignity (G, 2024).

Insights gathered from interviews with informants can reveal their views on the *merariq* tradition, illustrating how both sets of norms shape their understanding and implementations. This relationship is further depicted in Figure 2, which outlines the execution of the *merariq* tradition.

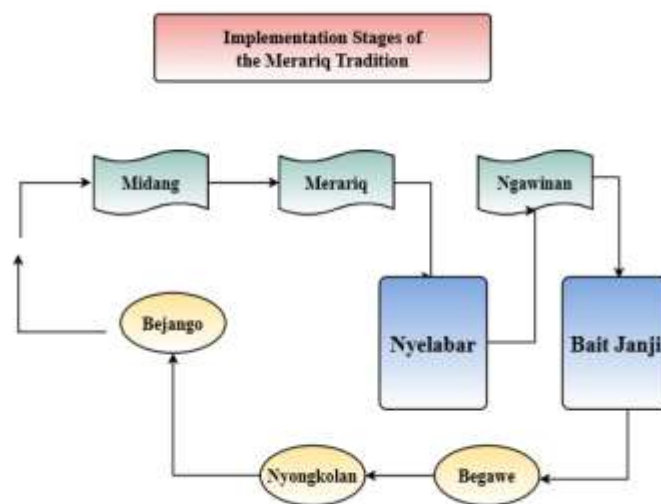


Figure 2. Implementation Stages of the *Merariq* Tradition

The figure illustrates the sequence of the *merariq* marriage tradition practiced by the Sasak people on Lombok Island. This tradition begins with *midang*, during which the groom makes a visit to the bride's home. Following this, *merariq* takes place, wherein the groom elopes with the bride-to-be. The next step is *nyelabar*, where the groom's family notifies the bride's family that their daughter has been taken (Azwar et al., 2024). This is then followed by *ngawinan*, the marriage ceremony during which the wedding vows are exchanged. After *ngawinan*, the process transitions to *bait janji*, a discussion regarding arrangements for *begaye* or *sorong serah aji krama*, leading to the *nyongkolan* procession. The *begaye* ceremony and *sorong serah aji krama* are subsequently conducted, after which *nyongkolan* occurs (Jayadi et al., 2023). During this procession, the bride is escorted to her family's home by the groom's family, relatives, friends, and community members, all accompanied by traditional musical instruments and dressed in traditional Sasak attire. The final stage, known as *bejango*, involves the groom's family visiting the bride's family home to strengthen family bonds and reinforce kinship ties.

### ***Midang or Silaturahmi***

The initial step before a man and woman decide to engage in *merariq* is the *midang*, or social visit. During this stage, the man visits the home of his beloved to cultivate a closer bond with her and her guardian (Erwinsya et al., 2020). As noted by a Sasak traditional leader, informant F in an interview, “Typically, *midang* takes place at night and must conclude by 10 p.m. During this visit, the woman is usually accompanied by her parents or guardian to ensure she is not alone with the visiting man” (F, 2023). This tradition is often regarded as being at odds with religious norms, as the contemporary practice of *midang* differs significantly from the past. Historically, men and women would meet in public spaces, making it quite rare for a man to visit a woman’s home for socializing with her family today (Sarmini et al., 2018).

Many parents may be aware of their daughter's potential partner but often lack a deeper familiarity with him. Interviews conducted by researchers with religious leaders in Narmada village indicate that this tradition can be consistent with religious norms, provided it follows specific guidelines. For instance, during the introduction ‘*ta’aruf*’, it is essential for a parent or guardian to be present; the couple should not meet alone (Hamdani & Fauzia, 2022a). According to Islamic teachings, when engaging in *ta’aruf*, the man and woman should come together under the supervision of a guardian to ensure a respectful and appropriate context for getting to know one another. Informant G said, “*Midang* was originally the same as *ta’aruf*, where a man visits a woman's house to introduce himself to her family, not like nowadays when people date outside” (G, 2024).

The *midang* procession presents a nuanced perspective on ethical norms. Traditionally, men exhibited a greater degree of respect, but this etiquette has diminished in contemporary society. For example, men participating in *midang* may opt not to wear traditional attire, such as sarongs, choosing instead to wear trousers. Furthermore, visitors often find themselves distracted by their phones, which detracts from meaningful engagement with the woman's family.

The sarong holds significant cultural and religious value within the Sasak Lombok community, symbolizing politeness. While the choice not to wear a sarong may signify a departure from tradition, it does not constitute a fundamental issue; rather, it serves as a metaphorical indication of politeness when visiting someone's home. Additionally, visitors may lose track of time during their stay, and the noise from their vehicles can disrupt the tranquility of others. Nevertheless, *midang* can also illustrate respect for ethical norms (Adithia, 2010). A man's decision to visit the woman's home and introduce himself to her family is an acknowledgment of respect. Informants highlighted the importance of exhibiting politeness and courtesy during *midang*. For instance, Informant A noted, “Yes, one must show polite and courteous behavior in speaking” (A, 2024). While Informant B added, “Yes, of course, in a polite way. If not, they will be expelled” (B, 2024). This view was supported by Informant C, who stated, “Yes, the man should come in a polite manner” (C, 2024). According to these informants, it is crucial for men to behave courteously during *midang* to ensure their intentions of getting acquainted with the woman's family are well-received, thereby preventing potential misunderstandings in the future.

### ***Merariq or Elopement***

Following the *midang* ceremony, if the man and woman feel a sense of compatibility, they move on to the next stage known as *merariq*, or elopement. In this phase, the man takes the woman he intends to marry. Alternatively, some may prefer a more formal proposal called *belakok*, where the man approaches his beloved directly to propose (Jayadi et al., 2023). Insights gathered through interviews with Sasak traditional leaders in Narmada village reveal that the *merariq* tradition has been passed down through generations, adhering to longstanding Sasak customs. Informant F stated,

*Merariq* is our traditional custom as Sasak people, so when someone is going to marry, they must first 'abduct' their partner. This tradition encompasses a series of ceremonies, including *midang*, *maling*, *nyelabar*, *marriage*, *begawe*, *nyongkolan*, and *bejanggo* (F, 2023).

In the Sasak culture, elopement is more prevalent than the formal proposal. Once both parties agree to elope and promise to meet at a predetermined place and time, the woman is taken to the *bale penyeboqan*, usually located at the man's relatives' house. The implementation of *merariq* may be perceived as conflicting with religious norms because, during the elopement process, there is no one accompanying the woman, and there is no *mahram* present (Rosdiana et al., 2018b). However, it is argued that *merariq* does not violate religious norms as there is no coercion during the elopement, and they are observed by the man's relatives at the *bale penyeboqan*, ensuring adherence to religious principles. Traditional leaders explain the origin of the *merariq* tradition by means of Sasak custom called *maling*, which is one of the traditions carried out for generations by Sasak people and characterizes the courage of a man (Triantini et al., 2017). While the elopement may not be deemed a violation of ethical norms due to its longstanding cultural tradition, some suggest that to better reflect courtesy, it might be preferable to choose the formal proposal '*belakok*' over elopement.

According to informants, *merariq* is not regarded as an act of worship or a manifestation of faith in the Almighty, as it is not based on religious teachings. They emphasize that *merariq* is merely a tradition specific to the Sasak community. Informant A notes, "No, because it's just a Sasak tradition" (A, 2024), which aligns with informant B viewpoint that it belongs to the realm of culture. Similarly, Informant C stresses that *merariq* is not a form of worship but a tradition or custom practiced by the Sasak people. Informant D takes a more critical stance, describing *merariq* as a criminal act, stating, "I don't think so because, as we know, '*merariq*' is a criminal act" (D, 2024).

Overall, the informants agree that *merariq* cannot be classified as a form of worship; rather, it is rooted in cultural practices. Additionally, from some perspectives, it is viewed as a potential criminal act, particularly within the framework of positive law in Indonesia, where elopement may be deemed a crime for taking a woman without her family's consent.

### ***Nyelabar or Selabar***

After successfully eloping with the woman, the man's family must undertake a process known as *mesejati*, which involves reporting the incident to the village head, customary leaders, religious figures, and community leaders (Jayadi et al., 2023). Following this, the village leaders from the man's side will communicate with the village leaders of the woman's family concerning the *nyelabar* procession. *Nyelabar* serves as the formal notification from the man's family to the woman's family that their daughter has eloped and is preparing for marriage. Once both families agree that the woman's family is receptive to receiving an envoy (referred to as *selabar*) from the man's side, this envoy will visit the woman's family home to provide detailed information about the elopement and clarify the identity of the prospective groom (Hotimah & Widodo, 2021b).

This stage is deemed to honor religious and ethical norms, reflecting a clear demonstration of mutual respect and courtesy. The *nyelabar* process is an integral part of the Sasak customary *merariq* procession, which typically occurs the day after the woman is taken from her home to join the man's family. However, variations in customs may exist across regions; if more than two days pass without the *nyelabar* procession or notification to the woman's family, it could lead to disgrace and potentially jeopardize the marriage (Wijaya & bin Mujib, 2024). Based on interviews conducted with a young man who married according to Sasak tradition informant E, he explained, "*Nyelabar is one of the stages in the Sasak merariq procession, where, a day after eloping, a representative is sent to inform the bride's family of the event*" (E, 2024). Information from various sources indicates that the *nyelabar* procession embodies a respectful approach, emphasizing the importance of informing the woman's family. This process facilitates the introduction of both



families and strengthens their kinship bonds (Erwinsya et al., 2020). Informant A stated, "*In terms of social etiquette, the nyelabar process greatly reflects these norms, as the groom's family sends a representative to inform the bride's family about the merariq and to initiate family relations*" (A, 2024). Similarly, Informant D commented, "*Nyelabar can be considered an initial meeting between the two families, showing mutual respect*" (D, 2024).

According to the informants, the *nyelabar* process embodies respect and courtesy, as evidenced by the groom's family's direct visit to the bride's family to convey information about the *merariq*. This visit serves not only as the initial introduction between the families but also strengthens kinship ties.

### **Ngawinan**

Following the *nyelabar* procession, the subsequent step is *ngawinan*, the marriage ceremony, which involves the *bait wali* procession. The *bait wali* entails seeking permission from the woman's family to conduct the marriage and witness the marriage contract '*aqd nikāh*' (Fitriyanti, 2023). During the *bait wali*, the *pisuke* is presented—a monetary gift from the man's side to the woman's family, given outside the formal dowry (Wijaya & bin Mujib, 2024). The *ngawinan* process involves the marriage contract, executed according to religious teachings. In the *bait wali* procession, where permission for marriage is sought and the *pisuke* is presented, there is no violation of religious or ethical norms. The process adheres to established religious regulations without altering or compromising the predefined procedures. The implementation of *ngawinan* conducted by the Sasak tribe can be seen in Figure 3.



Figure 3. *Ngawinan* Procession

Based on research conducted through interviews with a religious leader, is informant G the process of *ngawinan*, or '*aqd nikāh*' (marriage contract), is performed in accordance with Islamic teachings, without any alterations. The *ngawinan* ceremony, particularly the '*aqd nikāh*', involves the recitation of verses from the holy Quran, underscoring adherence to religious norms. Informant A remarked, "*Certainly, before the marriage contract is established, there is a recitation of the Quran*" (A, 2024). This perspective was reinforced by another informant, is informant B who stated, "*Yes, of course, because it resembles a regular marriage contract*" (B, 2024). A third informant, is informant C added, "*Yes, it is typically conducted before the marriage contract takes place*" (C, 2024). These insights indicate that the recitation of the Quran prior to the marriage contract, along with the execution of '*aqd nikāh*', aligns with established religious teachings, ensuring that the *ngawinan* process strictly adheres to religious norms without any deviations.

### **Bait Janji**

The subsequent stage after the formalization of the marital union involves the *bait janji* procession (Kholidi et al., 2021). This entails negotiations regarding the implementation of *sorong serah aji krama*, symbolizing the giving and receiving of the bride within the Sasak community.

This process takes place at the residence of the bride with the groom's family visiting (Mucharom et al., 2022). The *bait janji* procession encompasses the determination of the day and the expenses associated with the *sorong serah aji krama* until the execution of the *nyongkolan* to ensure the smooth running of the upcoming events. In the *bait janji* procession, the practice of religious and ethical norms is evident through the respectful negotiation between both parties. This signifies the respect extended towards the bride's family. Decisions are not unilaterally made but rather through mutual agreement during the negotiation. The agreed-upon decisions are then incorporated into the *sorong serah* process to be held at the bride's residence. The *bait janji* procession does not contravene religious or ethical norms, as it aligns with the prevailing customs in the bride's hometown (Adithia, 2010).

In an interview with a traditional leader, informant F he highlighted the importance of mutual respect and appreciation during the *bait janji* process. He remarked, “*In the bait janji process, it is essential to respect and appreciate one another to ensure that decision-making proceeds smoothly according to the agreements made by both families*” (F, 2023). The significance of respecting others was echoed by informant A, who stated, “*Yes, of course, because such matters must be agreed upon collectively*” (A, 2024). Informant B reinforced this idea, noting, “*Yes, we cannot make decisions unilaterally; discussions must include the bride’s family as well*” (B, 2024). The insights from these informants underscore the necessity of consensus and mutual agreement throughout the *bait janji*, aiming to facilitate the smooth execution of future events and mitigate potential issues.

### ***Begawe or Sorong Serah***

Following the agreed-upon date for the execution of the *sorong serah aji krama*, the procession known as *begawe* is carried out simultaneously with the *sorong serah aji krama* (Erwinsya et al., 2020). This marks the legal validation of the marriage within customary law. In the *sorong serah aji krama*, two parties are involved: the male side, termed the */pembayun penyorong/* or presenter, and the female side, termed the */pembayun penampi/* or recipient. *Begawe*, on the other hand, serves as a celebratory reception in Sasak society (Fazalani & Artika, 2023). It is a thanksgiving event conducted during weddings or circumcision ceremonies in Sasak communities. During *begawe*, the families of both the bride and groom invite relatives, friends, and community members to partake in a communal meal at the residence hosting the event (Yazid et al., 2024). The implementation of *begawe* conducted by the Sasak tribe can be seen in Figure 4.



Figure 4. *Begawe* Procession

The *begawe* procession reflects the values of helping one another and mutual cooperation, which are intrinsic to both religious and ethical norms (Elmira et al., 2024). These values are evident in the collaborative efforts of the community during the preparations for *begawe*, such as

sourcing necessary materials and collectively contributing to the event's arrangements. However, *begawe* can be deemed a violation of religious and ethical norms due to certain individuals taking advantage of the occasion to gather and purchase alcoholic beverages (Hotimah & Widodo, 2021b). These individuals often cause disturbances, particularly during the performance of *gendang beleq*, a traditional Sasak musical instrument played until late hours, potentially disrupting the rest of other community members.

Interviews conducted by researchers with traditional leaders, is informant F reveal that the *begawe* procession serves to strengthen friendships among neighbors. This event embodies the value of mutual cooperation, as community members assist one another in preparing for *begawe* (Vanni & Crosby, 2023). Their support includes making snacks, gathering food ingredients, and organizing cooking utensils. Informants convey that *begawe* reflects values in line with religious and ethical norms, such as mutual assistance, cooperation, and sharing (Sukmayeti, 2019). Informant A remarks, "Yes, during *begawe*, people help each other, at least from what I've observed" (A, 2024). Similarly, Informant B observed,

One can see the organization of the event; when people come together for *begawe*, especially in large groups, there's a clear sense of collaboration. Everyone works together for the event's success. This spirit of mutual assistance fosters a sense of togetherness and connection within the community (B, 2024).

These insights clearly indicate that *begawe* strongly embodies the religious and ethical norms of Sasak society, particularly emphasizing the importance of mutual assistance during communal activities.

### ***Nyongkolan***

The final phase of the *begawe* event is referred to as *nyongkolan*. This significant ritual involves escorting the bride to her family's residence while dressed in traditional Sasak attire (Setiyani & Tasrif, 2023). The procession is conducted on foot and includes family, relatives, friends, and members of the community, accompanied by traditional Sasak musical instruments (Fitriyanti, 2023). The implementation of *nyongkolan* conducted by the Sasak tribe can be seen in Figure 5.



Figure 5. *Nyongkolan* Procession

*Nyongkolan* is often viewed as conflicting with certain religious norms, as it allows men and women to mingle, dance, and sometimes gather closely without adequate supervision from elder figures (Kholidi et al., 2021). Additionally, many parents do not provide the necessary guidance or intervention, permitting these behaviors to persist. Moreover, the *nyongkolan* procession can lead to conflicts among adolescents, with the roots of these disagreements frequently unclear (Rosdiana et al., 2018b).

From an ethical standpoint, *nyongkolan* may be seen as a violation of standards due to the potential traffic congestion it creates, disrupting the flow of motorbikes and cars. However, it is essential to acknowledge that *nyongkolan* also aligns with religious and ethical principles, strengthening familial and communal bonds (Luhpuri et al., 2019). The procession reflects a sense of communal care, evident in the community's active participation in escorting the bride home.

To ensure that *nyongkolan* is conducted effectively, it is vital to execute the event in an orderly manner, minimizing disruptions and conflicts. This oversight should ideally be provided by village security to help maintain harmony and safety (Sukmayeti, 2019).

Based on interviews with one of the perpetrators of *merariq*, he noted that during the *nyongkolan* procession, it becomes clear who genuinely cares about us—those who take the time to participate. Informants express that *nyongkolan* embodies a communal spirit of care, highlighted by the enthusiastic involvement of the community (Setiyani & Tasrif, 2023). Informant A remarked, "Yes, we gather, socialize, and look out for one another. If there were no genuine concern, people wouldn't attend *nyongkolan*; they wouldn't come together unless they cared for each other" (A, 2024). This sentiment is echoed by Informant B, who emphasized, "At this event, we can see the high enthusiasm of the people participating" (B, 2024). According to the informants, *nyongkolan* reflects a deep sense of caring for others, as illustrated by the community's active engagement in this celebratory procession.

### **Bejango**

Following the completion of the celebratory events from *begawe* to *nyongkolan*, the subsequent day involves the *bejango* procession (Fitriyanti, 2023). *Bejango* entails a visit by the groom's family to the residence of the bride's family. This visit serves the dual purpose of fostering closer familial ties and acting as a farewell gesture from the bride to her family, symbolizing her departure to begin a new family with her husband. *Bejango* typically takes place in the late afternoon, after the 'asr prayer (Habiburrahman, 2017). *Bejango* is characterized by its alignment with religious and ethical norms, as it serves to strengthen family bonds. The procession is driven by the intention to nurture and fortify the familial relationships between both sides. Additionally, it provides an opportunity for the bride, now part of a new family, to bid farewell to her relatives.

Based on interviews conducted by researchers with a traditional leader, informant F, it was observed that, "*Bejango plays a vital role in strengthening the relationships between the families of the bride and groom, as well as introducing their extended families. It also serves as a farewell event for the bride to her extended family*" (F, 2023). There are no apparent violations of religious or ethical norms during the *bejango* procession. Informants emphasize that *bejango* represents a commitment to nurturing familial bonds. Informant A remarks, "Certainly, the value lies in nurturing these connections through the act of visiting, which strengthens relationships" (A, 2024). Informant B reinforces this idea, stating, "Indeed, this procession brings both families together, thereby strengthening the bonds of brotherhood" (B, 2024). Similarly, Informant C notes, "Clearly, the *bejango* procession enhances the familial ties between both parties" (C, 2024). Informants underscore that the *bejango* procession, as practiced by the Sasak community, effectively fosters closer connections between families that may not have previously known one another, ultimately forming two tightly-knit extended families.

### **Series of Stages and Symbolic Meanings of Merariq Tradition in Sasak Tribe Wedding**

The traditional *merariq* ceremony, widely practiced in the Lombok community, consists of several stages: *midang*, *merariq* 'elopement', *nyelabar*, *ngawinan*, *bait janji*, *begawe*, *nyongkolan*, and *bejango* (Erwinsya et al., 2020). The *midang* procession is a cultural tradition that has been handed down through generations, typically taking place in the evening, starting after *magrib* prayer and concluding by 10 PM. In the past, men participating in *midang* were required to wear a cloth or *sarong* and were prohibited from wearing trousers to uphold decorum (Jayadi et al., 2023).



However, societal changes have made this requirement less stringent, allowing men to forgo the *sarong*. During *midang*, a minimum distance of approximately four meters must be maintained between men and women to prevent any unauthorized physical contact. Furthermore, the presence of the female party's parents is considered essential for supervision (Surayya & Salat, 2023). Subsequently, *merariq* or elopement represents a widely popular form of marriage within the Sasak community. This tradition generally occurs during the night, with the mutual agreement of both parties and without any coercion (Rahiem, 2021). After successfully eloping with the woman, she is then taken to the *bale penyeboqan* or a hideaway house, typically belonging to the relatives of the participating man (Wijaya, 2022).

Once the man's family has completed the *mesejati* and reported the elopement incident to the community leader, the next step is to notify the woman's family. This process involves representatives from the man's family, traditional leaders, and the community leader, and is traditionally referred to as the *nyelabar* in Sasak society. During the *nyelabar*, the representatives from the man's side typically don traditional attire. However, this practice is increasingly less common, as many now opt for Muslim clothing, which is regarded as more appropriate for such visits or meetings (Afandi & Rosada, 2019). Following the *nyelabar* procession, the next step is the implementation of the marriage contract, referred to as *ngawinan* in the Sasak language. Prior to the *ngawinan* ceremony, the *bait wali* procession takes place, which involves soliciting a marriage guardian and presenting *pisuke*—a sum of money or goods provided by the man's family to the woman's family, in addition to the agreed-upon dowry (Mansyur, 2021).

The *bait wali* procession typically includes 7 to 15 representatives from the man's family, along with traditional leaders and community figures, who gather to meet the woman's family. After discussions regarding the amount of *pisuke* and reaching an agreement on payment, the *ngawinan* ceremony proceeds. *Ngawinan* is the marriage contract process conducted in accordance with religious principles (Hendri Nuriskandar, 2021). This process consists of several stages, beginning with an opening ceremony that includes reciting the *basmalah* and reading verses from the Quran. A marriage sermon is delivered by an official from the Religious Affairs Office or an Islamic scholar, culminating in the *ijab qabul* ceremony, which signifies the conclusion of the event.

The *ijab qabul* is the most sacred moment, during which the marriage guardian relinquishes responsibility for the prospective husband and officially hands over his daughter. Once the marriage contract is finalized, the official leads the recitation of the marriage prayer and supervises the signing of the marriage documents. The groom presents the marriage dowry to the bride and receives marriage advice regarding their rights and responsibilities as a married couple. The ceremony concludes with a prayer led by the official or religious leader, followed by the recitation of *hamdalah* (Nisa et al., 2022).

After the solemnization of the marriage contract or *ngawinan*, the next stage involves negotiations as a continuation of the process of determining the time for completing the traditional settlement known as *sorong serah aji krama*. The *sorong serah aji krama* procession is the culmination of the traditional ceremony in marriage, which has a decisive nature. This negotiation, called *bait janji*, plays a crucial role in determining the auspicious day, month, and the costs associated with the implementation of *sorong serah aji krama* to the *nyongkolan* procession. The success of this negotiation is crucial for the smooth running of the entire series of events. Although there is no specific timeframe between the wedding day and the negotiation regarding the traditional settlement, this depends on the agreement and capabilities of each family (Jamaludin & Sugitanata, 2021). The next step in the Sasak marriage ceremony is the *begawe* procession, commonly referred to in society as the wedding reception. In Sasak culture, *begawe* serves not only as a formal celebration but also as an opportunity for socializing and reinforcing family and community bonds. Unity in Sasak society is cultivated through a system of mutual cooperation known as *begawean*, where collaborative efforts are made to uphold a spirit of togetherness.

An essential component of the *begawe* is the *sorong serah aji krama* procession, which plays a crucial role similar to the *ijab qabul* in the marriage contract. This process is regarded as the core

of the traditional ceremony and legitimizes the customary marriage bond. The payment involved in the *sorong serah* is symbolic, utilizing *kepeng bolong* (coins with a hole in the center) that are no longer in circulation (Yaqinah et al., 2021). This ceremony typically occurs before the *nyongkolan* procession and is guided by the *pembayun*, a representative from the traditional leaders of both families. During this time, various customary obligations are fulfilled, particularly fines imposed on the groom for any breaches in the traditional settlement process (Wardatun et al., 2018).

After the completion of the *begawe* and *sorong serah aji krama* processions, the final activity on that day is the implementation of the *nyongkolan* procession. *Nyongkolan* is a series of customary activities that accompany weddings within the Sasak tribe in Lombok, West Nusa Tenggara. This procession involves a procession of the two newlyweds from the groom's house to the bride's house, accompanied by the groom's family and relatives wearing traditional attire. The procession is also accompanied by traditional music groups such as *gamelan*, tambourine players, or *gendang beleq*, which are traditional musical instruments of the Sasak tribe. The procession covers a distance of 1 to 1.5 kilometers from the bride's house, where the groom's procession is welcomed by representatives from the bride's family (Jamal Munawir, 2020). In the implementation of *nyongkolan*, the importance of cultural and traditional aspects in Sasak tribe wedding ceremonies is evident. Every element, from traditional attire to traditional music and the procession of the groom's entourage, holds deep symbolic values and embodies the meaning of togetherness among families. *Nyongkolan* is not merely a formal procession but a ritual that strengthens family relationships and reinforces the cultural identity of the Sasak tribe in the context of marriage. The continuation of this traditional practice reflects local wisdom passed down from generation to generation, giving a unique character to wedding ceremonies in the region.

After the *nyongkolan* procession is completed, the next day involves the *bejango* procession, typically in the afternoon. *Bejango* is a tradition where the newlywed couple, both the groom and the bride, visit the bride's family. During this visit, they bring food or *begawe* snacks, which are traditional snacks served during the *begawe* celebration, as a symbol of togetherness and joy. The *bejango* procession is not only a formal act but also encompasses profound symbolic meanings. This moment serves as a symbolic farewell of the bride to her family, signifying the transition to her new life as part of a new family. It is hoped that the *bejango* procession has a positive impact in strengthening family ties between the groom's and the bride's families (Diniyati et al., 2022). The implementation of *bejango* is expected to strengthen family relationships, create emotional bonds, and provide support in the new journey of the newlywed couple.

### **Newcomers' Perspective on *Merariq* as a Marriage Tradition in Lombok**

Based on the findings of the studies conducted by Hamdani & Fauzia (2022) and Hotimah & Widodo (2021), it can be concluded that the Islamic Law perspective on *merariq* emphasizes that the essence of this process is actually a turning process, in line with Islamic Sharia and not conflicting with religious norms. These research findings are consistent with previous studies indicating that the *merariq* tradition is not fundamentally at odds with religious and moral norms (Rahiem, 2021). The research conducted from the perspective of newcomers to Lombok reveals that the *merariq* tradition does not lead to violations of these norms, primarily due to the absence of written regulations explicitly prohibiting its practice. Furthermore, the informants expressed a positive viewpoint regarding the Sasak tribe's efforts to preserve the *merariq* tradition, viewing it as a significant facet of cultural heritage that should be maintained to protect cultural identity amid the changes of time (Chong et al., 2024). These findings provide a deeper insight into how newcomers perceive the compatibility of local traditions with religious norms and moral values (Ray-Yol et al., 2025). The implications of this research can serve as a basis for promoting and preserving cultural diversity while honoring the religious values of the local community.

Ambarwati & Mustika, (2018) in their research explains how the process of implementing a marriage carried out using Javanese customs starting from *nontoni*, namely seeing the prospective bride and groom up close to the last ritual ceremony *Ngidak Tigan*. Gunawan, (2019), in his article

explains how the process of implementing a marriage is carried out using Sundanese customs starting from proposing to *munjungan*. Of the several wedding traditions in Indonesia, the *merariq* tradition is different from wedding traditions from other regions because in the *merariq* tradition the groom kidnaps or flees the bride to a house that has been agreed upon as a hiding place where this process is part of the existing customary procedures. The process of kidnapping or running away is often done without the consent and knowledge of the woman's parents and will be told after the woman is hidden. The *merariq* tradition is different from other traditions because it symbolizes the courage of Sasak men.

Several factors affect how newcomers perceive their experiences with the *merariq* tradition. Language barriers, educational backgrounds, and personal values play a significant role in how newcomers understand and engage with the marriage customs of the Sasak community (Álvarez-Montoya & Ruiz-Ballesteros, 2024). The diverse perspectives of newcomers regarding *merariq* have broader implications for their relationships with local communities. Those who adopt or at least come to understand the *merariq* practice may find it easier to forge social connections with local Sasak residents, fostering trust and mutual respect. Conversely, newcomers who struggle to accept or adapt to these customs may encounter social distancing or conflict, which could impact community cohesion (Griffin et al., 2000).

Research indicates that cultural adaptation is a significant predictor of successful social integration, influencing the levels of social harmony or potential tension within the multicultural landscape of Lombok society (Ray-Yol et al., 2025). Additionally, the views and experiences of newcomers can also shape the *merariq* tradition itself. When newcomers express differing opinions about this custom, they may inadvertently catalyze changes within the tradition, resulting in adaptations that reflect a more inclusive cultural practice. On the other hand, resistance from newcomers could pose challenges to the preservation of *merariq*, particularly if younger generations begin to question its relevance and are swayed by modernization. This dynamic underscores the potential for both continuity and change within Sasak cultural practices, driven by the interplay between tradition and multiculturalism.

This study encountered several limitations. A key issue was the potential for social desirability bias during interviews, which may have impacted the authenticity of participants' responses. Additionally, language and cultural barriers posed challenges, as not all newcomers were proficient in the Sasak language, potentially reducing their ability to articulate their perspectives on the *merariq* tradition accurately. Moreover, the study focused on specific regions of Lombok Island, meaning that the findings may not fully represent the views of all migrants regarding *merariq*. These limitations highlight that, while the findings are indicative, they should be interpreted with caution. Further research could expand the scope to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the subject.

## CONCLUSION

The *merariq* tradition is a distinctive marriage custom practiced by the Sasak community on the island of Lombok. This tradition involves eloping with a woman without her parents' knowledge, founded on mutual consent and free from coercion. It is crucial to acknowledge that this practice is an integral part of the cultural framework of the Sasak community. In contrast, religious norms are behavioral guidelines derived from the sacred texts of various religions, while moral norms are influenced by individual conscience. Within the context of the *merariq* tradition, the Sasak community interweaves these norms into its practices. Observations made by newcomers to Lombok suggest that the *merariq* procession does not violate any religious or moral norms, as confirmed by local informants. This perception arises from the lack of explicit regulations that prohibit the tradition within these frameworks. Nevertheless, it is essential for the *merariq* tradition to remain consistent with existing cultural norms. Newcomers stress that deviations from religious guidelines may be perceived as violations, even in the absence of specific prohibitions. Therefore, it is imperative to ensure that the practice of *merariq* aligns with traditional customs and avoids

incorporating elements that could be regarded as deviations. A valuable avenue for future research could involve a comparative study of the *merariq* tradition alongside other marriage customs in Indonesia. Furthermore, examining the differing perspectives of the local Sasak community and newcomers regarding the *merariq* tradition may offer deeper insights into the relationship between religious and moral norms

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