

# Interfaith Marriage in North Lombok

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## Interfaith Marriage in North Lombok: Sociological Perspective of Islamic Law

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### ABSTRACT

Interfaith marriage has no legal foundation. However, this marriage practice is still carried out among the people of North Lombok. Using a purposeful sampling methodology, the authors used a descriptive qualitative method to collect data from several interviewees, including village heads, religious leaders, and interfaith marriage players. According to this study, interfaith marriage requires the bride to follow the religion of her prospective spouse. Environmental factors, kinfolk or kindred, married by accident, socio-cultural factors, a lack of religious knowledge, and transmigration all contribute to this marriage. At the very least, this marriage psychologically affects spouses and families. It also has an impact on the religious peace of the surrounding communities. In the meantime, interfaith leaders advise against interfaith weddings.

Keywords: North Lombok, interfaith marriage, sociology, Islamic Law

### ABSTRAK

Perkawinan beda agama tidak memiliki dasar hukum. Namun, praktik perkawinan ini tetap dilakukan di kalangan masyarakat Lombok Utara. Dengan menggunakan metodologi purposive sampling, penulis menggunakan metode deskriptif kualitatif untuk mengumpulkan data dari beberapa narasumber, termasuk kepala desa, tokoh agama, dan pelaku perkawinan beda agama. Menurut penelitian ini, perkawinan beda agama mengharuskan calon mempelai wanita untuk mengikuti agama calon pasangannya. Faktor lingkungan, saudara atau kerabat, menikah karena kecelakaan, faktor sosial budaya, kurangnya pengetahuan agama, dan transmigrasi semua berkontribusi pada pernikahan ini. Paling tidak, pernikahan ini secara psikologis mempengaruhi pasangan dan keluarga. Hal ini juga berdampak pada ketentraman beragama masyarakat sekitar. Sementara itu, para pemimpin lintas agama menyarankan agar pernikahan beda agama tidak dilakukan.

Kata kunci: Lombok Utara, perkawinan beda agama, sosiologi, Hukum Islam

## INTRODUCTION

Marriage in Islam is a sacred commitment between two people to create a *sakinah, mawaddah wa rahmah* family. Marriage is a fitrah given to humans by Allah SWT. as a religious self-perfection (Yasin et al., 2016). Everyone's fascination with the opposing sex is commonplace, especially in a heterogeneous society like Indonesia. Without understanding the borders of race, ethnicity, and religion, social engagement might be impossible to avoid. As a result, in social reality, Muslim and non-Muslim relationships can be linked in various life activities, including marriage.

Marrying someone of a different religion is considered a religious aberration. This frequently produces unrest and violent reactions among people, particularly Indonesians (Arifin, 2018; Azmi, 2021; Laela et al., 2016). In today's world, interfaith marriage is unavoidable. Interfaith marriages are becoming

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more common as population mobility, and religious values erode (Amna et al., 2017; Bukido et al., 2021; Owoahene-Acheampong & Prempeh, 2020; Ramadhan & Qolyubi, 2021).

Indeed, Islam has regulated the way of marriage between Muslims and non-Muslims themselves. However, with a different understanding of the meaning of the texts of the Qur'an, there are still *ikhtilaf* among scholars. These pros and cons depart from the interpretation of the term "people of the book" in three verses of the *Qur'an*, namely surah *Al-Maidah* verse 5, *Surah Al-Baqarah* verse 221, and *Surah Al-Mumtahanah* verse 10 (Sulistiyowati, 2008).

In Law No. 1 of 1974 concerning marriage, interfaith marriages have not been regulated clearly and in detail. This differs from Article 57 of the Marriage Law, which regulates mixed marriages. Mixed marriage is defined as a marriage between a man and a woman, both of whom are in Indonesia, who comply with different laws due to differences in citizenship, and one of the parties is an Indonesian citizen (Marriage Law No. 1 of 1974, articles 58-62). Thus, it can be understood that interfaith marriages are not included in mixed marriages because the meaning of mixed marriages in Law No. 1 of 1974 is narrower than what is intended (Article 1 Regulations concerning Mixed Marriages).

According to the explanation above, no provisions officially and in detail control the subject of interfaith weddings in both Islamic law and the Marriage Law, resulting in a formal legal vacuum for couples who will carry out interfaith marriages.

Interfaith marriages are still common in society today, as evidenced by one in North Lombok Regency (KLU). According to data from the North Lombok Regency's Central Statistics Agency (BPS), the number of religious adherents in the population is 19,777 for Islam, 17 for Protestants, 9 for Catholics, and 17835 for Catholics, Hindus, and 11353 for Buddhists (North Lombok Statistic, 2020).

Some researchers discuss interfaith marriage. Jawad & Elmali-Karakaya (2020); Kurttekin, (2020); Nasir (2020); Sewenet et al. (2017); Suhasti et al. (2018) argue that Muslim women should not marry non-Muslim males. Because the husband has jurisdiction over the wife regarding children, notably in citizenship and marriage, this restriction is based on worries that the children of interfaith couples will follow their father's religion. Marriage between Muslims and non-Muslims is often frowned upon in Islam. Islam considers any attempt by a Muslim to marry a non-Muslim to be illegal and vehemently condemns it. The only exception is when it comes to conversions. Muslims can marry from any faith group if their partner converts to Islam.

In West Nusa Tenggara, particularly on the island of Lombok, research has been conducted marriage practices (Aniq, 2012; Hamsun & Aminulloh, 2017; Rosdiana et al., 2018). Additionally, this study differs from Nasir (2020), which focused on the Hindu and Muslim groups as its subjects. However, this study broadens the subject of inquiry by including all samples of interfaith marriages, including those between Muslims, Hindus, Christians, and Buddhists. However, the majority of this research exclusively includes traditional marriages. In the meantime, this study examines interfaith marriages in Lombok, one of the regions in Indonesia with the highest concentration of Muslims.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This type of study employs qualitative research approaches in the field. In contrast, this study took a sociological approach to Islamic law. The social science of Islamic law sociology explores the reciprocal relationship between societal change and the application of Islamic law (Manullang, 2020). This study focuses on three aspects, including the practice of marriage, its impact, and the opinions of several figures regarding marriage.

The location of this research is North Lombok Regency, particularly in Bentek Village, Indonesia. The data was collected in at least three ways: interviews, observation, and documentation (Malkus & Riehl, 2021). In terms of interviews, the authors spent an average of 25 minutes with the informants conducting in-depth interviews. Furthermore, the author observes the behaviour and activities of the community, especially those related to the practice of interfaith marriage. *Awig-awig* (customary rules) obtained from the village government were also used as supporting data for this research. The following are the informants who took part in this study. See table 1.

**Table 1. Informants Details**

No	Informant	Role
1	Informant 1	Village Head
2	Informant 2	Islamic Figure
3	Informant 3	Hindu Figure
4	Informant 4	Marriage Actor
5	Informant 5	Marriage Actor
6	Informant 6	Marriage Actor
7	Informant 7	Marriage Actor
8	Informant 8	Marriage Actor
9	Informant 9	Customary Leader
10	Informant 10	Buddhist Figure
11	Informant 11	Buddhist Figure
12	Informant 12	Marriage Actor

At the start of the procedure, informants were asked for permission to conduct interviews. Informants who decline to take part in interviews have the option to leave the site. Each informant was told that the interview would be recorded with a voice recorder and that the results would be used in the study. Additionally, informants have the option of not responding to any of the questions. The author assured the informants that their personal information would be kept private.

Data saturation was used to identify when to stop sampling connected to distinct groups based on category theoretical saturation. When the researcher runs out of new data to work with, he or she has reached saturation. The data acquired is considered saturated when researchers notice similar events regularly (Saunders et al., 2018).

Before the interview process, the informants will be requested for their permission to participate in the research to ensure research ethics (George, 2016). Informants were informed that a voice recorder would be used to capture every aspect of the session. The researcher further underlines that the study will not display any of the informants' personal information. The informant is permitted to decline, conduct an interview, continue, or refuse to respond to a question. Each of the informants' interviews lasted for about 20 to 25 minutes. The entire process in this research has been approved by the Institute for Research and Community Service, Mataram State Islamic University.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Interfaith Marriage History in Lombok

On Lombok, interfaith unions have existed since before the arrival of the British. Early undeniable interreligious and interethnic unions can be traced to a period when the Sasaks (Muslims) and Balinese (Hindus) engaged in frequent interaction after the latter had arrived in Lombok for trade and later for

conquest. Regardless of its political reason, the most prosperous mixed ethnic and religious relationship was that of the Balinese king of Lombok, Anak Agung Gede Ngurah Karangasem (r. 1866–1894), and a noblewoman, Sasak Muslim Denda Aminah (Agung 1991, 183–185). The marriage strengthened the interethnic and religious links between the Balinese and Sasaks, in which both parties upheld their respective religions. The king constructed a modest Muslim prayer hall in the palace to signify his devotion to and respect for his wife and his Muslim subjects. The king's family started to adopt Islam more after this process. Even one of his grandsons became a Muslim and received instruction in Qur'anic recitation in the palace (Wacana et al. 1988, in Nasir, 2020).

Even though it was more common for the wife to change to her husband's religion, their union demonstrates that interfaith marriage was allowed. Although there are no statistics or records about this kind of union, Nasir (2020) said that it was normal for Balinese men to marry Sasak Muslim women or for Sasak men to marry Hindu women and that the wife would typically convert before the husband did. As a result of marriages between their forebears, Balinese and Sasaks frequently have the same ancestry.

Before colonialism, Southeast Asian nations were noted for their fluid ethnoreligious interaction and cultural diversity. For instance, Robert Hefner points out that it is likely that ethnic boundaries in the Malay Archipelago were not strictly upheld throughout the pre-colonial or commercial era. A "permeable ethnicity" is revealed, where "ethnic identities appear to have been canopied by a trans-ethnic notion of Malayo-Indonesian civilization," according to Boellstorff (2003). How Anthony Reid describes pre-colonial marriage may demonstrate this permeability. He quotes two observations made by travellers in the Malay Archipelago, noting that in Makassar, South Sulawesi, "Christian men kept Mahometan women, and Mahometan men, Christian women," and in Melaka, "the infidel marries Muslim women while the Muslim takes pagans to wife" (Bassett & Reid, 1989). The archipelago, including Lombok, seems to have been characterized by a high inter-ethnic and inter-religious marriage rate. Therefore, it should be no surprise that marriages across different social strata, rather than interfaith marriages, caused the biggest uproar. While noble men may marry female commoners, *Sasak* noble women should not wed men of a lesser class. A report on this kind of union from north Lombok blatantly underrates this ban at the start of the 1970s.

Because they did not violate custom (*adat*), interreligious weddings were initially less contentious than marriages between social classes. *Adat*/tradition dominated Lombok society until the 1980s and continues to do so today, especially in the north and south of the island. According to the marriage *adat*, a man must be able to "take" a lady from her parents' home, hide her in a safe location, and then notify her parents that he has eloped with her within three days. After that, the man's agent and the woman's parents meet to discuss the bride-wealth, who will be the marital guardian, and the wedding's cost, which the potential husband will cover. The marriage can be formally constituted if an agreement has been made and all dues have been received. The concept of "stealing" a lady is founded on the idea that women are so prized that men must fight for their hand in marriage. The majority of the time, elopements involve couples with similar racial, religious, and socioeconomic backgrounds. If an elopement complies with *adat*, a woman's biological family or parents have no reason to object because doing so would harm their daughter's reputation. Marital is governed by *adat*, religion, and state law, but the tradition was once the main source of marriage custom. The custom that dictates the woman in an interfaith marital elopement must convert demonstrates *adat*/custom's power.

### Interfaith Marriage Practice

According to the author's observations, interfaith marriages in North Lombok Regency (KLU) primarily happened between Muslims, Hinduism, and Buddhism. Marriage between a Hindu and a

Buddhist, or vice versa, is extremely rare, if not impossible. This happens because Muslims dominate the majority of the population of North Lombok Regency so the perpetrators of interfaith marriages in KLU are Muslims and non-Muslims (Hindus and Buddhists).

Marriages between couples of various religions have occurred in the past and continue to do so today, according to informant 1.

"The state recognizes all religions, and their rights are guaranteed by law, including the right to marry and the right to have a religion. Administratively, marriage must follow the rules that apply in Indonesia. For example, couples who marry at the Office of Religious Affairs (KUA) must be Muslim. Still, in terms of religious rights, a person may choose to embrace the religion he believes in". (Informant 1)

"Marriage between Muslims and Hindus had existed for a long time, even before we were born, and it is a cultural tradition that we must all maintain. We have no prohibitions or coercion because we are married to people of different religions" (Informant 3)

Marriages between religions, whether between Muslims and Hindus or Muslims and Buddhists, are still valid if they meet administrative conditions, according to Informant 1.

According to informant number 9, brides in interfaith marriages tend to follow the religion of their prospective spouse. Furthermore, the marriage will be conducted following her prospective husband's religion. Even though such marriages are believed to be against Islamic law by the broader public, the inhabitants of North Lombok Regency, particularly in the Gangga District, continue to practice it.

Based on the information obtained from informant 9, there are 4 stages in conducting interfaith marriages in the Village, Bentek Regency, and North Lombok, including:

#### ***Merariq / Memaling (Eloping)***

The Sasak people's most prevalent type of marriage is *merariq*, or *memaling*. *Merariq* is derived from the Sasak word *berari*, which means "to run," and has two meanings: one is the literal meaning, and the other is the entire process of marrying according to Sasak custom. *Berari* or fleeing is a technique or approach for escaping or releasing a girl from the confines of her parents and relatives.

#### ***Mesejati***

It means that the men send several local community leaders or traditional leaders to report to the village head or *keliang/hamlet* head to announce the marriage about the identity of the prospective groom and then report to the woman's family.

#### ***Selabar***

The aim of informing the bride-to-family is followed by a discussion of her customs, including *Aji Krama*, which is a set of values based on the evaluation of *kepeng bolong* (hollow coins) or *kepeng jamaq* (ordinary coins). This joyous occasion is frequently combined with the guardian's desire.

Meanwhile, interfaith marriages do not use this method, because Muslims and Hindus differ in their marriage traditions. Therefore, if a man from the Hindu side marries a woman from Islam, the tradition is replaced by giving real money to honor the bride's family (Informant 9).

### ***Marriage Process***

People are accustomed to such issues, so when both partners are ready to marry, they have considered the ramifications of leaving their religion, being away from their families, and breaking the bonds created by interfaith marriages, particularly for women who follow their husbands' religion.

Then, from a favourable legal standpoint, interfaith marriage couples in North Lombok are legal because they follow religious norms and embrace the same religion before marriage. For the marriage contract, conditions, and pillars to be finished and the marriage to be registered.

Among this definition, marriage in Muslim, Hindu, and Buddhist cultures is founded on the presence of brotherhood, specifically *Ukhuwwah Wathaniyah* (Brotherhood between fellow regions or regions) and *Ukhuwwah Insaniyah* (Brotherhood between colleague regions or regions) (Brotherhood between fellow humans). According to the concept of *ukhuwwah wathaniyah*, a Muslim must create synergies and cooperation among fellow citizens of the country or between fellow areas of residence without discriminating against the religion he practices to create a conducive, safe, and peaceful environment in which to practice his religion.

### **The Cause of Interfaith Marriage**

According to interviews and observations from several informants, various factors in Bentek Village, KLU District contribute to interfaith marriages, including:

#### ***Environmental Factors***

The residents of Bentek Village are quite diverse, with many different religious beliefs. In the hamlets of Luk Pasiran and Karang Lendang, for example. People in one hamlet practice three different religions: Islam, Buddhism, and Hinduism. The pattern of social, cultural, and religious interaction in Bentek Village is quite complex. As a result, people will feel more united regardless of their religious beliefs. The statement was stated by informant 1.

The educational environment might also influence interfaith marriages. According to informants 4, 5, 6, and 7 confessions, their love for their partner rises when they go to school. This is because students at one particular school practice a variety of religions.

#### ***Family and Relative Factors***

According to informant 10, the impact of interfaith marriage traditions passed down from generation to generation causes a wide range of theological variances within one generation. Buddhist descendants in *Bentek*, for example, are likely to have at least one Muslim ancestor or family member. As a result, interfaith marriages are frequent, even to keep in touch and expand family ties.

#### **Transmigration Factor**

*Bentek* Village residents typically engage in transmigration activities to find a job abroad or beyond the region. Based on the evidence of informant 8, who stated:

"I moved to other regions to work around 2007. That's when I met my wife. Interact with one another to establish a sense of love through time. After that, I went straight to her parents and married her in an Islamic manner. After legally becoming my wife, I returned to Lombok and remarried using the Buddhist tradition." (Informant 8)

### ***Married by Accident***

Marriage because of pregnancy before marriage is one of the most common causes of conflict between families and religious members. According to several community leaders, forced marriages occur as a result of this because the family has no other option.

### ***Low Understanding of Religion***

The majority of those who engage in interfaith marriages do not appear to have a strong religious background. This is reinforced by the statement of informant 8, who stated that:

"We do not comprehend the law about interfaith marriage restriction." Religion, in our perspective, is not a barrier to marriage. Marriage must be founded on mutual feelings of love" (Informant 8)

### **Interfaith Marriage Impact**

#### ***Diminished Harmony between Families***

When one of the bride and groom converts to make their marriage lawful, this impacts them. For example, if a Muslim man marries a Hindu or Buddhist lady, the woman's extended family will be divided. Furthermore, it is not uncommon for those who convert to another religion to be shunned by their relatives.

#### ***Changing People's Minds***

Weddings between interfaith couples that frequently occur in society appear to affect or change people's perspectives so that when these marriages occur frequently, the community accepts them as normal or even a tradition. According to Muslim officials, such a marriage is not our custom because it is forbidden in Islam to marry non-Muslims.

#### ***Religious Harmony Development***

In Indonesia, religious harmony is the most important aspect of the community's social life; there is no sensitivity to ethnicity, race, or religion. Living with different beliefs is wide open amid rising diversity in people's lives due to the influence of population mobility and other social activities. Therefore, collective awareness is required to sustain religious harmony in Indonesia, particularly in North Lombok. Inter-religious marriage is one of the measures of living in harmony in a plural society.

From the explanations of informants 2, 10, and 11, interfaith marriage in a pluralistic society certainly has an impact on religious harmony and, in this case, strengthens inter-religious harmony to create a sense of respect for one another. This is caused by the joining of two large families of different couples. So, if there is religious friction, it will be quickly resolved based on kinship.

### **Community Leaders' Point of View**

#### ***Customary Leader***

Traditional authorities believe marriage in the community is a human being's right to live with the spouse he loves. Regarding interfaith marriages, *adat*/custom prohibits every married pair from continuing to practice their religions. Because of the multicultural nature of our culture, inter-religious marriages have become a habit that cannot be stopped.



Custom is a unifier in society's numerous forms of diversity; regardless of religion, offenders of interfaith marriages must follow existing customary law that has been agreed upon since ancient times.

Traditional elders, according to him, present an overview of three types of regulations (*awig-awig*), and practically every village in North Lombok Regency follows *awig-awig* principles in their everyday lives, including *Tapsila* (Relation to God), *Krama* (Relation to nature), and *Gama* (Relation to human).

### **Interfaith Leaders**

In this section on the views of religious leaders, the author will present the results of interviews related to his views on interfaith marriages that exist in the community. In this case, the interfaith figures that the researcher describes are three, namely Islamic, Buddhist and Hindu religious figures.

### **Islamic Figure**

According to informant 2 (one of the Muslim leaders in Gangga District), interfaith marriages in the community are not valid if the parties still hold their individual views.

"If each bride and groom maintain their original religion, marriage is invalid under Islamic law. We are religious under the guidance of revelation, so we must obey what religion commands and prohibits." (Informant 2)

In practice, marriages between couples of different religions have always involved changing religions and joining the one they both agree on.

React to such a marriage. According to informant 2, such marriages frequently result in partner division. Because of disagreements between partners, it is common for one of the perpetrators of marriage to return to their original religion.

If a Muslim family chooses to become apostates and follow their husband's religion or vice versa, Islamic religious leaders regret it greatly because it indicates that our faith obedience is very weak and that we are tempted by temporary happiness without considering the messages from religion or his closest family. Informant 2 suggested that socializing religious meetings, especially for young people, could help to limit the practice of interfaith marriages.

### **Hindu's Figure**

Marriages between couples of various religions, while they continue to practice their religion, are considered unreasonable by Hinduism. According to Hindu tradition, the wife must practice her husband's faith. Religious disagreements in one family, according to Informant 3, will produce problems in the future, especially for their children.

### **Buddhist Figure**

Marriage is arranged by the separate traditions in the Buddhist religion. No written text governs interfaith marriage. Informants 10 and 11 confirmed this.

"We who are Buddhists have long-lived and lived together with our Muslim and Hindu brothers. In a pluralistic society, we cannot limit the association of people to socialize with other religions. So that inter-religious marriages often occur, there are no textual rules that prohibit or order them." (Informant 10)

"There is nothing in religious law that prohibits you from loving someone. We don't have terms like apostasy or anything like that. Nothing should be burdened, restricted, or penalized because this is

an issue of a mate. If he converts to another faith, please respect his new convictions rather than vilifying his old religion. We just propagate kindness in Buddhism." (Informant 11)

Interfaith marriages cause numerous issues in society. One of them is when the woman's family would normally take the child and return to the woman's original religion. If the parents protest because the male is Buddhist and the female is Muslim or Hindu, the parents will take their child back with their own preteens and reasoning. We religious and traditional leaders will form an agreement with the family at the outset of the marriage to avoid situations like these.

## CONCLUSION

According to this study, interfaith marriage has been practiced in North Lombok Regency for decades. *Merariq/maling, mesejati, selabar*, and the marriage process are all steps in the practice of this marriage. A woman who desires an interfaith marriage must be willing to convert to her husband's religion. Factors that cause marriages of interfaith couples in North Lombok Regency include environmental factors, kinship or kinship, marriage by accident, transmigration, and ignorance of religious teachings. The impact of this marriage is the stretching of family relations and the poor view of the wider community towards the perpetrators. On the other hand, interfaith marriages are considered to increase religious harmony. Customary leaders stated that interfaith marriages were not a problem if they followed the customary provisions in force in the community. Meanwhile, all religious leaders do not recommend interfaith marriages.

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# Interfaith Marriage in North Lombok

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