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ANALYSIS OF THE PRINCIPLE OF 'URF IN RESPONDING TO THE INFLUENCE OF FOREIGN CULTURES IN THE ERA OF GLOBALIZATION

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ABSTRACT

Globalization has accelerated the process of acculturation of foreign cultures into the lives of Indonesian Muslims. The principle of 'urf as a secondary source of Islamic law has become a strategic instrument for filtering foreign cultures to ensure they remain in harmony with Sharia law. This study aims to analyze the role of 'urf in three areas: (1) assessment of acculturation, (2) protection of religious identity, and (3) determination of the limits of foreign cultural adaptation in modern religious practices. Using a legal-normative approach with qualitative analysis, this study concludes that 'urf shahih based on maqāṣid syariah can be an effective filter without having to close itself off from the developments of the times.

Keywords: U'rf shahih, globalization, cultural acculturation, Islamic identity, religious adaptation

1. INTRODUCTION

The acceleration of globalization in the twenty-first century has fundamentally transformed the patterns of social interaction, cultural transmission, and religious expression within Muslim societies. Advances in information and communication technology have created an unprecedented condition in which cultural products, values, and lifestyles originating from various parts of the world are disseminated rapidly and continuously, transcending geographical and political boundaries. In Indonesia, this phenomenon is particularly evident in the pervasive use of digital platforms such as social media, streaming services, and online communities, which function as primary channels for the circulation of foreign cultural narratives. As a result, the process of cultural acculturation no longer occurs gradually through direct contact, trade, or migration, but rather instantaneously and massively through algorithm-driven digital spaces.[1]

[1] Song Niu, "Virtual Hajj as a Response to Demographic and Geopolitical Pressures," *Contemporary Islam* 17, no. 1 (April 23, 2023): 95–108, https://doi.org/10.1007/s11562-023-00512-1; Jasmin Dall'Agnola and Hélène

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The development of information and communication technology in the 21st century has created a borderless world. Foreign cultural influences no longer enter Indonesia through trade or colonization, but through digital platforms such as TikTok, Netflix, Spotify, and YouTube. Data from We Are Social (2024) shows that the average Indonesian internet user spends 8 hours and 35 minutes per day online, 63% of which is spent on foreign entertainment content. This situation has given rise to a phenomenon of rapid and massive acculturation.[2]

Amidst this wave, Muslims are required to have a solid filtering mechanism so as not to lose their Islamic identity. One of the classic instruments that remains relevant is the principle of 'urf (custom). Scholars of usul fiqh such as al-Syathibi, al-Qarafi, and Ibn 'Abidin agree that 'urf can be the basis of law as long as it meets the conditions of shahih, namely that it does not contradict qat'i texts, is generally applicable, and does not cause harm.[3]

This situation poses both opportunities and challenges for Indonesian Muslims. On the one hand, globalization facilitates access to knowledge, technological innovation, and new forms of social engagement that can enhance religious education, daʿwah, and communal life. On the other hand, it introduces cultural practices and value systems that may conflict with Islamic norms, ethical standards, and long-established religious traditions. The uncritical adoption of foreign cultural elements risks diluting Islamic identity and generating normative confusion, particularly among younger generations who are highly exposed to global digital culture. Consequently, the question of how Islamic law responds to the influx of foreign cultures becomes increasingly urgent in contemporary discourse.[4]

Within the framework of Islamic jurisprudence, the principle of ʻurf (custom or socially recognized practice) occupies a strategic position as a mediating concept between normative texts and lived social realities. Classical scholars of uṣūl al-fiqh, such as al-Qarāfī, al-Syāṭibī, and Ibn ʻĀbidīn, acknowledged that custom can serve as a secondary source of law, provided that it fulfills certain criteria. ʻUrf is considered legally authoritative when it is widely practiced, rationally

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[2] Kinga Bierwiaczonek and Jonas R. Kunst, "Revisiting the Integration Hypothesis: Correlational and Longitudinal Meta-Analyses Demonstrate the Limited Role of Acculturation for Cross-Cultural Adaptation," *Psychological Science* 32, no. 9 (September 20, 2021): 1476–93, https://doi.org/10.1177/09567976211006432; Nur'Aini, "Effects of Acculturation of Assimilation in the Search for Cultural Identity by the Punjabi Ethnic Minority in Medan, Indonesia," *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment* 31, no. 6 (August 18, 2021): 799–812, https://doi.org/10.1080/10911359.2020.1825257; Jonas R. Kunst and Alex Mesoudi, "Decoding the Dynamics of Cultural Change: A Cultural Evolution Approach to the Psychology of Acculturation," *Personality and Social Psychology Review* 29, no. 2 (May 26, 2025): 111–44, https://doi.org/10.1177/10888683241258406.

[3] Faroque Amin, "Applicability of Islamic Methodology Concerning Novel Issues to the Organ Transplantation in Religious Scholars' Contemporary Discourse," *Religions* 12, no. 9 (August 24, 2021): 670, https://doi.org/10.3390/rel12090670; Ani Yumarni et al., "The Implementation of Waqf as Â€˜Urf in Indonesia," *Sriwijaya Law Review*, July 31, 2021, 287–99, https://doi.org/10.28946/slrev.Vol5.Iss2.1126.pp287-299.

[4] Sayyed Mohamed Muhsin et al., "Can Global Bioethics Benefit From Islamic Jurisprudential Principles?," *Bioethics* 40, no. 1 (January 27, 2026): 35–44, https://doi.org/10.1111/bioe.70035; Rüdiger Lohlker, "Fiqh Reconsidered: Indigenization and Universalization of Islamic Law in Indonesia," *Interdisciplinary Journal for Religion and Transformation in Contemporary Society* 7, no. 1 (July 8, 2021): 188–208, https://doi.org/10.30965/23642807-bja10011.

acceptable, and does not contradict definitive (qaṭʿī) textual evidence or the objectives of Islamic law (maqāṣid al-sharīʿah). This doctrinal flexibility enables Islamic law to remain responsive to social change without compromising its foundational principles.[5]

In the context of globalization, the relevance of ʼurf becomes increasingly pronounced. The emergence of new customs (ʼurf jadīd), particularly those shaped by foreign cultural influences, requires careful evaluation to determine whether they qualify as ʼurf ṣaḥīḥ (valid custom) or fall into the category of ʼurf fāsid (invalid custom). This evaluative process is essential to ensure that cultural adaptation contributes to maṣlaḥah (public benefit) rather than mafsadah (harm). Without a clear normative framework, Muslim societies may oscillate between two extreme responses: outright rejection of all foreign cultural elements or uncritical acceptance that undermines religious values.[6]

Despite the growing scholarly interest in globalization and Islamic identity, studies that specifically examine the role of ʼurf as a systematic legal filter for foreign cultural acculturation remain relatively limited, particularly within the Indonesian context. Many discussions focus on cultural resistance or moral decline without adequately engaging with the internal mechanisms of Islamic legal theory that allow for contextual adaptation. This gap highlights the need for a more nuanced analysis that situates ʼurf within contemporary socio-cultural dynamics and explores its practical implications for modern religious life.

Accordingly, this study aims to analyze the principle of ʼurf in responding to the influence of foreign cultures in the era of globalization. Specifically, it seeks to examine: (1) the function of ʼurf in assessing processes of cultural acculturation, (2) its role in safeguarding Islamic religious identity amid global cultural flows, and (3) the determination of normative boundaries for adapting foreign cultural elements into modern religious practices. By employing a normative-legal approach grounded in uṣūl al-fiqh and maqāṣid al-sharīʿah, this research is expected to contribute to a more balanced understanding of how Islamic law can remain adaptive, contextual, and principled in the face of rapid global change.

2. METHODS

This study uses a qualitative approach because it aims to explore a deep understanding of how the principle of 'urf in Islamic law is applied to respond to the phenomenon of the influx of foreign cultures in the era of globalization. The qualitative approach was chosen because it allows researchers to analyze the meanings, concepts, interpretations, and normative arguments that have developed in usul fiqh literature and the views of contemporary scholars.

This approach is also considered appropriate because the research does not focus on numerical or statistical measurements, but rather on the interpretation of texts and contexts, including a critical study of the conditions of 'urf, its classification, and its relevance to modern

[5] Amin, "Applicability of Islamic Methodology Concerning Novel Issues to the Organ Transplantation in Religious Scholars' Contemporary Discourse"; Yumarni et al., "The Implementation of Waqf as Â€˜Urf in Indonesia."

[6] Burhanudin Harahap, Tastaftiyan Risfandy, and Inas Nurfadia Futri, "Islamic Law, Islamic Finance, and Sustainable Development Goals: A Systematic Literature Review," *Sustainability* 15, no. 8 (April 13, 2023): 6626, https://doi.org/10.3390/su15086626.

cultural dynamics. Thus, qualitative research provides ample space to understand social and legal realities holistically through the exploration of descriptive data in the form of words, sentences, opinions of scholars, texts from books, and scientific documents.

3. DISCUSSION

3.1 Reactualization of the Concept of 'Urf in the Dynamics of Digital Globalization

Globalization in the digital age no longer simply brings cultures together, but shapes a new cultural consciousness through social media algorithms that work massively and simultaneously. In this context, 'urf cannot be understood merely as a static custom, but as a dynamic social construct (al-'urf mutaghayyir) that continues to undergo negotiation between local values, religion, and global trends. The classical thinking of usul fiqh scholars such as al-Qarafi and Ibn 'Abidin has opened up the possibility that changes in customs can lead to changes in law as long as they do not violate the principles of qat'i and maqāṣid al-syarī'ah.[7]

The findings of this study show that the penetration of foreign cultures through digital platforms has produced a transnational 'urf jadid, but its acceptance in Indonesian Muslim society remains dependent on normative legitimacy. This confirms that 'urf is not merely a description of social practices, but rather an evaluative instrument that works prescriptively in determining the suitability of a culture for adoption. Thus, 'urf functions as cultural jurisprudence that mediates between normative texts and empirical reality.

3.2 ’Urf as a Normative Filter between Maslahat and Mafsadah Foreign Culture

Sporty hijabs, online studies, and digital da'wah visualizations are concrete examples of how global culture can be constructively integrated because they meet the three main requirements of 'urf: they are widely accepted, do not contradict qat'i texts, and bring real benefits. Conversely, practices such as crop top hijabs, Halloween, and Valentine's Day represent fasid 'urf because they contain elements of tashabbuh, violation of modesty boundaries, or symbolism that contradicts the values of tawhid. At this point, this study reinforces the thesis that globalization is not value-neutral. Therefore, the acceptance of foreign cultures without a valid 'urf framework has the potential to give rise to identity disorientation and the normalization of non-Islamic values in Muslim life.[8]

3.3 Implications of 'Urf on the Reconstruction of Contemporary Muslim Religious Identity

[7] Christopher A. Bail, “Can Generative AI Improve Social Science?,” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 121, no. 21 (May 21, 2024), https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.2314021121; Lu Cheng, Kush R. Varshney, and Huan Liu, “Socially Responsible AI Algorithms: Issues, Purposes, and Challenges,” *Journal of Artificial Intelligence Research* 71 (August 28, 2021): 1137–81, https://doi.org/10.1613/jair.1.12814.

[8] Marta Estrela et al., “Sociodemographic Determinants of Digital Health Literacy: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis,” *International Journal of Medical Informatics* 177 (September 2023): 105124, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijmedinf.2023.105124; Tanja Schroeder et al., “Older Adults and New Technology: Mapping Review of the Factors Associated With Older Adults’ Intention to Adopt Digital Technologies,” *JMIR Aging* 6 (May 16, 2023): e44564, https://doi.org/10.2196/44564.

Muslim religious identity in the era of globalization is a negotiated identity, which is the result of a dialogue between tradition, text, and modernity. 'Urf plays a strategic role in maintaining the continuity of this identity so that it is not reduced to mere symbols or cultural expressions without normative substance. The results of the study show that when 'urf is ignored, expressions of religiosity tend to shift from a sharia orientation towards an aesthetic and popularity orientation. However, when 'urf shahih is used as a foundation, innovation actually strengthens the internalization of religious values. Technology-based da'wah practices, educational animations, and the use of virtual spaces can be effective means of transmitting Islamic values across generations. Thus, 'urf contributes directly to religious resilience, which is the ability of Muslims to uphold the basic principles of religion while being adaptive to the changing times.[9]

3.4 Limits of Foreign Cultural Adaptation: Synthesis between 'Urf and Maqāṣid al-Syarī'ah

This study confirms that the limits of foreign cultural adaptation are not sufficiently determined by popularity or global trends, but must be tested through the integration of 'urf shahih and maqāṣid al-syarī'ah. When a cultural practice supports the preservation of religion (ḥifẓ al-dīn), reason (ḥifẓ al-'aql), and public morality, it can be accepted as part of mu'tabar 'urf. Conversely, cultures that weaken these dimensions must be rejected even if they have become global. This approach positions Islam as an adaptive but principled normative system. Globalization is not positioned as an absolute threat, but rather as a reality that must be managed through a contextual Islamic legal framework.[10]

Therefore, 'urf shahih becomes a strategic instrument in ensuring that modernization goes hand in hand with the preservation of the basic values of sharia. 3.5 Theoretical Synthesis: 'Urf as a Paradigm of Contemporary Islamic Social Law. Theoretically, the findings of this study enrich the discourse of contemporary ushul fiqh by positioning 'urf as a relevant social law paradigm in a global society. 'Urf functions not only as a secondary source of law, but also as a normative adaptation mechanism that allows Islamic law to remain alive and operational in the context of rapid cultural change.[11]

Thus, the application of 'urf shahih in responding to foreign cultural influences proves that the flexibility of Islamic law is not a compromise of principles, but a manifestation of its methodological depth. This framework makes an important contribution to the development of cultural fiqh (fiqh al-tsaqāfah) oriented towards public interest, identity sustainability, and the integrity of Islamic values in the era of globalization.

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[9] Harahap, Risfandy, and Futri, "Islamic Law, Islamic Finance, and Sustainable Development Goals: A Systematic Literature Review"; Dorota Weziak-Bialowolska et al., "Childhood Predictors of Religious Reading: A Cross-National Analysis in the Global Flourishing Study," *Scientific Reports* 15, no. 1 (July 10, 2025): 24899, https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-025-10142-7.

[10] Jerik Leung et al., "A Scoping Study of Cultural Adaptation Frameworks," *Health Promotion Practice* 26, no. 4 (July 11, 2025): 807–25, https://doi.org/10.1177/15248399241292317; Claudia Corpus-Espinosa et al., "Exploring Cultural Adaptations: A Scoping Review on Adolescent Mental Health and Substance Use Prevention Programs," *Prevention Science* 26, no. 2 (February 2025): 204–21, https://doi.org/10.1007/s11121-025-01779-x.

[11] Yumarni et al., "The Implementation of Waqf as Â€˜Urf in Indonesia"; Amin, "Applicability of Islamic Methodology Concerning Novel Issues to the Organ Transplantation in Religious Scholars' Contemporary Discourse."

4. CONCLUSION

The principle of 'urf shahih acts as a normative filter that helps Indonesian Muslims cope with the rapid influx of foreign cultural acculturation without losing their religious identity. By using maqāshid al-syarī'ah, harmony with qat'i texts, and the absence of harmful elements as benchmarks, 'urf provides a clear evaluative framework for determining which cultural innovations are acceptable to adopt and which should be rejected. Therefore, various forms of renewal such as sporty hijabs, online religious lectures, educational visual media, and the use of technology such as the metaverse can be accepted as 'urf jadid as long as they bring benefits and do not violate the limits of sharia. Conversely, practices that contain elements of imitation, violate the rules of modesty, or normalize values that contradict tawhid such as crop top hijabs, transparent hijabs, Valentine's Day, or excessive aesthetics in da'wah are considered incompatible with 'urf shahih and should be rejected.

With the implementation of adaptive yet principled 'urf shahih, Muslim communities are not only able to filter various forms of global culture, but also develop socio-religious innovations that are relevant to the demands of the times. This approach allows Islam to appear as a flexible religion while still adhering to the guidelines of Sharia law, so that the process of globalization does not become a threat to religious identity, but rather an opportunity to strengthen the morality, rationality, and spiritual integrity of the people amid modern changes.

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