

## THE TRADITION OF WOMEN PROPOSING TO MEN FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF ISLAMIC LAW AND CULTURE IN THE COMMUNITIES OF LAMONGAN AND TRENGGALEK

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### Abstract

Proposal is a process conducted prior to marriage with the aim of establishing a matchmaking relationship between a man and a woman. In Payaman Village, Solokuro Subdistrict, Lamongan Regency, and Gandusari Village, Gandusari Subdistrict, Trenggalek Regency, there is a unique tradition where women propose to men. This tradition is rooted in customs passed down by religious and community leaders from generation to generation. This study aims to understand the implementation of this tradition, along with the perspectives of Islamic law and local wisdom related to the practice. The research method used is qualitative, with interviews conducted with religious and community figures involved in the practice. Theoretical and discussion sections must examine the religious arguments demonstrating that this tradition does not violate Islamic law. This tradition has an impact on strengthening women's roles, balancing power, improving communication, enhancing marriage quality, and enabling social adjustment. The results of the study show that the tradition of women proposing to men is based on long-standing customary practices preserved by the local community and, most importantly, does not violate Islamic law.

**Keywords:** Islamic Law, Proposal Tradition, Local Wisdom

### INTRODUCTION

Engagement (peminangan) is a preliminary step before marriage, which is prescribed in Islam as a means to ensure that both parties enter the marital bond with mutual understanding, awareness, and informed decision-making. Linguistically, as noted in the Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia (Indonesian Dictionary), the word pinang (to propose) is defined as the act of requesting a woman to become a wife. The derivative forms include meminang (to propose), pinangan (proposal), pemina-ngan (process of proposing), and pelamar (suitor). Similarly, lamaran refers to a marriage proposal, either for oneself or on behalf of someone else.

In terms of legal foundation, engagement is regulated in the Kompilasi Hukum Islam (Compilation of Islamic Law), specifically Articles 11, 12, and 13. These articles state that a proposal can be made directly by the person seeking a spouse or through a trusted intermediary. Regarding the legal implications of engagement, Article 13

Paragraphs 1 and 2 clarify that: (1) an engagement does not create binding legal consequences, and both parties have the right to end the engagement; (2) the termination of an engagement should be conducted respectfully, in accordance with local customs, to maintain harmony and mutual respect.

According to Wahbah Zuhaili, *khitbah* is a statement of intent from a man to marry a woman, which is then conveyed by the woman to her guardian. This expression can be made directly or through the man's family. Once there is mutual agreement, the couple is considered engaged and the engagement bears legal implications. Scholars such as Slamet Abidin and Aminuddin describe engagement as a man's request to a woman to be his future wife, according to customary practices in his region. The Encyclopedia of Islamic Law also defines *khitbah* as a man's declaration of intent to marry a particular woman, with the woman subsequently announcing the engagement.

Several studies have addressed the phenomenon of women proposing to men from the perspective of tradition and Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh munakahat*). For instance, a study by Fatkhurozi (2019) in Japan Village, Ponorogo Regency, explored this tradition and its implications for gender roles in marriage. The study concluded that the practice is rooted in ancestral customs and is believed to bring blessings, including abundant sustenance. Importantly, it does not violate Islamic law. While the tradition is acceptable under *fiqh munakahat*, the study found that traditional gender roles in the village limit women's autonomy, as husbands are not expected to assist in childrearing and wives are restricted in expressing opinions.

Most previous studies have focused on Islamic law. This study, however, aims to extend the discussion by examining the tradition itself. The conceptual framework of this research draws on prior findings while reasserting the definition of engagement in Islam—as a preliminary step before marriage (Masduki, 2019: 62–65). Engagement should ideally strengthen the intent to marry, and while traditionally initiated by men, it is also found in some cases that women propose to men (Sa'diyah, 2019). A hadith supports the notion that a woman may express her desire to marry a particular man, and Islamic scholars agree that this is permissible.

The proposal of Siti Khadijah to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) is a well-known example, serving as a basis for contemporary Muslim women to express such intentions. In modern times, proposals have evolved into customary practices involving rituals like exchanging rings and celebratory gatherings. A contextual interpretation of hadiths related to women proposing to men is needed, as community understanding varies and may influence the acceptance of this tradition. Proper guidance can ensure alignment with Islamic principles (Fatkhurozi, 2019).

Community leaders in Payaman Village (Solokuro Subdistrict, Lamongan) and Gandusari Village (Gandusari Subdistrict, Trenggalek) affirm that proposals initiated by women are long-standing traditions. These customs have unique historical

backgrounds and are seen as a unifying element within the community. Importantly, these leaders agree that such traditions do not contradict Islamic law, as male leadership within the household remains intact. Furthermore, families involved in the engagement process also consider traditional practices such as determining auspicious dates for proposals (Masduki, 2019).

## RESEARCH METHODS

This article employs a qualitative method (Huberman & Miles, 2002) to explore the tradition of women proposing to men from the perspective of Islamic law and local wisdom. The main objective is to understand how Islamic law and local wisdom influence the preservation of this tradition and its relevance in the context of marriage proposal law in Indonesia. The philosophical foundation of this article is constructive, focusing on customary law in regions that preserve the tradition of women proposing to men. This research falls under the ethnographic category (Creswell, 2013), centered on traditions in East Java, particularly in Payaman Village, Solokuro District, Lamongan Regency, and Gandusari Village, Gandusari District, Trenggalek Regency. These customary rules reflect the values of local wisdom and are associated with the ideals of a *sakinah* (harmonious) family, and therefore continue to be upheld today.

The research was conducted within communities that practice the tradition of women proposing to men in Lamongan and Trenggalek Regencies, from February to July 2024. Primary data were obtained through interaction with local customary communities, while secondary sources included accredited journal articles and relevant books. Data collection methods comprised observation, interviews, and documentation (Creswell & Poth, 2016). Data analysis was carried out using an inductive framework, allowing broad conclusions to be drawn from specific observations (Bohorquez et al., 2024). This analysis includes an examination of the objectives of marriage in Islam (*maṣlaḥah* family) as well as the practice of *maṣlaḥah* family using customary law theory. The results of the study indicate that the tradition of women proposing to men continues to be highly respected by customary communities in Lamongan and Trenggalek.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### The Law of *Khitbah* (Marriage proposal)

The legal basis used as a foundation regarding proposals, as previously stated, is the word of Allah SWT in Surah Al-Baqarah verse 235:

أَنْفُسِكُمْ فِي أَنْتُنَّ أَوْ الرِّسَاءِ حَظْبَةٍ مِنْ وَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ فِيمَا عَرَّضْتُمْ بِهِ

“And there is no blame upon you for proposing to women by indirect speech or for keeping it concealed within your hearts.” (Surah Al-Baqarah: 235.)”

Indeed, many verses in the Qur'an and Hadiths of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) discuss the issue of betrothal. However, there is no clear or explicit command or prohibition regarding betrothal, unlike the explicit commands concerning marriage in both the Qur'an and the Hadiths of the Prophet (SAW). Therefore, in determining its legal status, no scholars have declared it obligatory; rather, it is considered *mubāḥ* (permissible).

The majority of scholars argue that the legal status of *khitbah* (betrothal) is not obligatory. However, Dawud al-Zahiri maintains that betrothal is obligatory. This difference arises from the interpretation of the Prophet's actions regarding betrothal—whether they are to be regarded as obligatory or merely recommended (*sunnah*). The Hadiths serving as the basis for the practice of betrothal will be further discussed in the section on the method of proposing.

Based on the aforementioned textual evidence, it is clear that when someone makes a promise, they must uphold it and are not permitted to betray the commitment that has been made. This principle applies even in the context of betrothal, which does not yet carry binding legal consequences or obligations for either party. Therefore, one should not cancel a betrothal without a rational justification and must act in accordance with the requirements of Islamic law (*sharī'ah*).

In principle, a proposal made by a man to a woman does not result in any legal consequences. The Compilation of Islamic Law (Kompilasi Hukum Islam – KHI) states: “(1) A betrothal does not result in legal consequences, and the parties are free to terminate the engagement. (2) The freedom to terminate the engagement must be carried out in a proper manner in accordance with religious guidance and local customs, so that harmony and mutual respect are maintained” (Article 13 of the KHI).

Since betrothal in principle does not result in legal consequences, engaged couples are still prohibited from *khalwah* (being alone in private) until the marriage contract (*'aqd al-nikāḥ*) is concluded. However, if accompanied by a *mahram*, *khalwah* is permitted. The presence of a *mahram* serves to prevent acts of immorality. A narration from Jabir reports that the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) said: “Whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day, let him not be alone with a woman without her *mahram*, for the third among them is the devil.”

### **Requirements of *Khitbah* or Proposal**

The requirements in a proposal are divided into two categories: *mustahsinah* requirements and *lazimah* requirements. *Mustahsinah* requirements are recommendations for a man intending to propose to a woman to first examine the woman he intends to marry, in order to ensure the sustainability of their married life in the future. These *mustahsinah* requirements include: first, the woman being proposed should be of equal status (*kufu'*), in terms of wealth, education, and social standing.

Second, the woman should possess affectionate characteristics and be fertile. Third, she should be distantly related. Fourth, both the proposer and the proposed must be aware of each other's conditions.

Meanwhile, lazimah requirements are mandatory conditions that must be fulfilled before a proposal takes place. The validity of the proposal depends on fulfilling these lazimah requirements, which include: the woman is not already being proposed to by another man or, if she is, the previous proposal has been withdrawn; the woman is not in her 'iddah period; and the woman being proposed is not a mahram (unmarriageable kin).

According to the majority of scholars (jumhur ulama'), a woman eligible for a proposal should meet the following criteria: she must be a Muslim, meaning both are Muslims and consciously practicing Islamic teachings; she descends from healthy and fertile lineage; she possesses good moral character, as reflected in her family's social and cultural background; she is capable of managing economic matters; she has physical beauty, meaning an attractive appearance to her husband so he feels comfortable at home and not tempted by other women. Preference is also given to virgins. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said: "You should marry virgins, for they are sweeter in speech, more fertile, and more content with little." (HR. Ibn Majah and al-Baihaqi). She should also not be from the same close family or kin).

### **The Wisdom Behind a Proposal**

From an Islamic legal perspective, scholars allow a man to look at the woman he intends to marry, as stated in QS. Al-Ahzab [33]: 52. Seeing the prospective wife is considered important because visual interaction can foster emotional closeness and help the man assess his attraction before proceeding to the next stage. The aim of this permissibility is to ensure that the man feels calm and confident before taking the relationship to marriage. If a man does not see his prospective wife and later finds incompatibility, it may result in dissatisfaction. Therefore, the Prophet (peace be upon him) encouraged men to first see their prospective wives to avoid regret later on.

### **The Tradition of Women Proposing to Men in Payaman Village, Solokuro, Lamongan**

The tradition of women proposing to men can have varied impacts on household harmony depending on the prevailing cultural values (Nisa, et al., 2021). The origin of this tradition in Lamongan has been passed down from generation to generation since the reign of Raden Panji Puspokusumo, also known as Tumenggung Lamongan, ruler of Lamongan from 1640 to 1665. This unique tradition, in which women take the initiative to propose to men, has become a part of the region's cultural heritage. (Ibu Zaroh, Interview, February 24, 2024).

This tradition originated from the story of Princess Andansari and Princess Andanwangi, daughters of Adipati Wirasaha, who wished to propose to the sons of

Raden Panji Puspokusumo—Panji Laras and Panji Liris. In the tale, Panji Laras and Panji Liris, who had a hobby of cockfighting, participated in a match in the Wirosobo area, which is now known as Kertosono, Nganjuk. The twin daughters of Adipati Wirasaha were mesmerized by their good looks and persuaded their father to propose on their behalf. Although this was considered a breach of norms at the time, Adipati Wirasaha went through with it for the sake of his beloved daughters. Since then, the tradition of women proposing to men began to take root and has been preserved as an ancestral custom that continues to this day. (Mr. Habib, Interview, February 24, 2024).

Based on an interview with Mr. Habib, this tradition is rooted in two main factors. First is the cultural factor: it is a practice passed down through generations as a way of respecting and preserving ancestral customs. This tradition is considered unique, and the community holds it in high esteem. They acknowledge and legitimize it through the actual practice of women proposing to men in the Lamongan area. Second is the social or environmental factor: the local community views this tradition as a form of respect from a woman to her prospective husband, and it is seen as a positive act. The tradition is still practiced today, and if a woman is proposed to by a man first, she may face social sanctions. She will be viewed negatively and may be discriminated against for not adhering to the tradition, with beliefs that her married life will be troubled, filled with misfortune, and chaotic. On the contrary, if the proposal is initiated by the woman, it is believed she will be blessed with abundant sustenance and a peaceful life. (Mr. Budiman, Interview, February 24, 2024).

### **View Islamic Law Regarding the Tradition of Women Proposing to Men in Lamongan**

There are several hadiths that discuss women's proposals to men. One of them is a hadith in the book Sahih al-Bukhari (Number 4726) which has the following text:

حَدَّثَنَا عَلِيُّ بْنُ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ حَدَّثَنَا مَرْحُومٌ بْنُ عَبْدِ الْعَزِيزِ بْنِ مِهْرَانَ قَالَ سَمِعْتُ ثَابِتًا الْبُنَانِيَّ قَالَ كُنْتُ عِنْدَ أَنَسٍ وَعِنْدَهُ ابْنَةٌ لَهُ قَالَ قَالَ أَنَسُ جَاءَتْ امْرَأَةٌ إِلَى رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ تُعَرِّضُ عَلَيْهِ نَفْسَهَا قَالَتْ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ أَلَيْكَ بِي حَاجَةٌ فَقَالَتْ بِنْتُ أَنَسٍ مَا أَقَلَّ حَيَاءَهَا وَاسْوَأَاتَاهُ قَالَ هِيَ خَيْرٌ مِنْكَ رَغِبْتَ فِي النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فَعَرَضْتَ عَلَيْهِ نَفْسَهَا  
رَغِبْتُ فِي النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فَعَرَضْتُ عَلَيْهِ نَفْسَهَا

Marhum bin Abdul Aziz bin Mihran narrated that he heard Thabit al-Bunani say that he was once in the presence of Anas, who had a daughter. Anas said that one day, a woman came to the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) and directly expressed her desire to him. The woman asked, “O Messenger of Allah, are you interested in me?” Anas’s daughter then commented, “How little shame she has.” Anas explained that the woman was better than his daughter because she had the courage to express her feelings directly to the Prophet (peace be upon him) (Narrated by al-Bukhari). (Al-Aasqalani, 1992).

The commentary and explanation of the above hadith have been clearly outlined by Islamic scholars. In the commentary of Sahih Bukhari, Fath al-Bari, Ibn Hajar explains that the woman referred to in the hadith is Layla Bint Qays. He also explains that it is permissible for a woman to offer and introduce herself to a righteous man in matters of religion. However, the man must not demean or belittle the woman. If the man chooses to decline, it must be done in a gentle and respectful manner. Furthermore, Imam al-Nawawi emphasizes that a woman's request to be married to a pious man is a commendable (sunnah) act. However, if the woman's intention is merely to seek worldly gain, then the act is considered blameworthy. (Al-'Asqalani, 1992: 249).

Islam views tradition as something that can be tolerated as long as it does not contradict the law and religion, and as long as it is not associated with beliefs that lead to polytheism (shirk). In the context of a marriage proposal (khitbah), a woman must have a sincere and noble intention that does not go against religious principles. This is in accordance with the principles of Islamic legal maxims, which state that:

الْأُمُورُ بِمَقَاصِدِهَا

"Everything depends on the goal." (A. Ghozali Ihsan, 2023)

The saying of the Prophet (peace be upon him), narrated by the six major hadith compilers from 'Umar ibn al-Khattab, states:

إِنَّمَا الْأَعْمَالُ بِالنِّيَّاتِ، وَإِنَّمَا لِكُلِّ امْرِئٍ مِمَّا نَوَىٰ

"Indeed, actions are (judged) by intentions, and indeed each person will get what they intended." (A. Ghozali Ihsan, 2023)

From this explanation, it can be understood that any matter with a good intention will bring about the goodness that is intended. Such as the practice of khitbah (marriage proposal) initiated by women toward men, as carried out by the communities in Payaman Village, Solokuro District, Lamongan Regency and Gandusari Village, Gandusari District, Trenggalek Regency. These communities have sincere and noble intentions in practicing the female-initiated khitbah. The people of Jatisari, for example, aim to find righteous and well-mannered sons-in-law.

In reality, the female khitbah practice in these communities continues sustainably in accordance with the public interest (maslahah) due to evolving social phenomena. Therefore, maslahah becomes the basis of various legal rulings. It is natural, then, for legal changes to occur. Eliminating harm (mafsadah) brings about benefit (maslahah) for human life. The communities believe that the customary practices they carry out have provided a new form of life, and thus, the female-initiated proposal is considered a good tradition among the Muslim societies of Payaman Village, Solokuro District, Lamongan Regency and Gandusari Village, Gandusari District, Trenggalek Regency. This is explained in the principles of Islamic

law, namely:

الْحَاجَةُ تُنَزِّلُ مَنْزِلَةَ الضَّرُورَةِ عَامَّةً كَانَتْ أَوْ خَاصَّةً

" Needs can take the status of emergencies, whether they are general or specific." (A. Ghozali Ihsan, 2023)

The above principle explains that legal concessions are not only applicable to harm (darurah), but also apply to needs (hajat), whether general needs or specific ones. From the above explanation, the author concludes that the proposal (khitbah) by women practiced by the community of Payaman Village, Solokuro District, Lamongan Regency and Gandusari Village, Gandusari District, Trenggalek Regency is permissible and does not violate Islamic law. Because the tradition of ngemblong which has existed since their ancestors does not contain elements of polytheism nor does it legalize what is forbidden or vice versa. And it can be understood that a proposal (khitbah) does not have to be made by a man while the woman waits, but rather the woman can initiate it when it is time to start a family, and there is no need to wait too long. As for the opinion of Imam Bukhari on proposals made by women, he recognized the specific nature of the story of the woman who offered herself and derived from the Hadith a general rule that permits a woman to offer herself to a pious man, desiring his righteousness, and that this is allowed. If the pious man is interested in her, then he may marry the woman in accordance with the requirements of marriage. (Al-Imam Al-Hafizh Ibn Hajar Al-Asqalani).

The proposal by a woman to a man among the pre-Islamic Arab society was already known, as in the case of the proposal by Sayyidah Khadijah to Prophet Muhammad SAW. At that time, Prophet Muhammad SAW was 25 years old and Sayyidah Khadijah was 40 years old. Sayyidah Khadijah submitted a proposal to marry Prophet Muhammad SAW, although during the era of Jahiliyyah there was a custom that prohibited women from proposing to men. Khadijah's interest arose when she observed the intelligence and trustworthiness of Prophet Muhammad SAW in trade. The proposal was also influenced by a dream Khadijah had, in which she saw the sun descending from the sky and entering her house, illuminating the entire city of Mecca. After consulting with her uncle, Khadijah proposed to Prophet Muhammad SAW. (Awaliyah, 2020).

During the time of Prophet Muhammad SAW, there were several cases of women proposing to men, including Sayyidah Khadijah who proposed to the Prophet SAW, as well as a woman who proposed to the Prophet SAW, and Sayyidina Umar who offered his daughter Hafshah to Uthman, Abu Bakr, and the Prophet SAW. Based on historical records, the phenomenon of women proposing to men had already occurred during the Prophet's time, even involving the Prophet SAW himself.

In Islamic law, khitbah is part of the system that governs all aspects of marriage. Khitbah includes action (fi'lah), contract ('iqdah), and position (jilsah). For



example, when a man proposes to a woman, it means he invites her to marry in a way that is common and accepted in society. The person who performs khitbah is called khatib, and khitbah itself refers to the proposal process. This is also mentioned in Surah al-Baqarah (2) verse 235 in the Qur'an.

النِّسَاءِ خُطْبَةٍ مِنْ وَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ فِيْمَا عَرَّضْتُمْ بِهِ

" And there is no sin upon you for indirectly proposing to women." (Q.S. 2 [al-Baqarah]: 235). (Ministry of Religious Affairs, 2023).

Fiqh scholars define khitbah as a man's effort to propose marriage to a woman with the intention of marrying her, and the woman then announces the engagement. In the Compilation of Islamic Law (Kompilasi Hukum Islam/KHI), Chapter I, Article 1, khitbah is described as an initial process aimed at establishing a matchmaking relationship between a man and a woman. Khitbah is the first step taken by a man to propose to a woman to become his wife. This process is expected to allow both parties to get to know each other, to understand each other's strengths and weaknesses. The aim is to avoid disappointment in the future and to ensure that the couple can complement and cover each other's shortcomings in building a household.

The conditions of khitbah are explained in the Compilation of Islamic Law (Kompilasi Hukum Islam/KHI), Article 12. These provisions include: 1. A proposal may be made to a woman who is a virgin or a widow whose iddah period has ended. 2. A woman who has been divorced and is still in the iddah raj'iyah period may not be proposed to. 3. It is prohibited to propose to a woman who is currently in the process of being proposed to by another man, unless the prior proposal has ended or has been rejected by the woman. 4. The termination of a proposal can occur through an official statement declaring the engagement nullified, or indirectly if the man who proposed withdraws and leaves the woman. From the above provisions, it is evident that khitbah or engagement is generally carried out by a man to a woman, either directly by the proposer himself or through a representative such as a guardian (wali).

Khitbah is generally carried out by a man to a woman; however, there is no prohibition for a woman to propose to a man. During the time of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), a woman could propose marriage to a man if she desired a righteous husband who possessed good religious knowledge and was capable of being a good imam. An example of this is Siti Khadijah, who proposed to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) through her uncle. Imam Al-Bukhari also recorded this topic in one of his chapters entitled "A Woman Offers Herself to a Righteous Man," which is based on a hadith of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him).

حَدَّثَنَا مَرْحُومٌ، قَالَ سَمِعْتُ ثَابِتًا، يَقُولُ كُنْتُ مَعَ أَنَسٍ جَالِسًا وَعِنْدَهُ ابْنَةُ لَهُ فَقَالَ أَنَسٌ جَاءَتْ إِمْرَأَةٌ إِلَى النَّبِيِّ ﷺ فَقَالَتْ يَا نَبِيَّ اللَّهِ هَلْ لَكَ فِي حَاجَةٍ فَقَالَتْ ابْنَتُهُ مَا كَانَ أَقَلَّ حَيَاءَهَا فَقَالَ هِيَ خَيْرٌ مِنْكَ رَغِبْتُ فِي رَسُولِ اللَّهِ ﷺ فَعَرَّضْتُ عَلَيْهِ نَفْسَهَا

Translation: “Marhum narrated to us, he said: I heard Thabit Al-Bunani say: I was sitting with Anas, and beside him was his daughter. Anas said: A woman came to the Prophet (peace be upon him) and offered herself to him. She said: O Prophet of Allah, do you have need of me? Anas’s daughter said: How little modesty she has, and how improper her act was. He replied: She is better than you; she desired the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him), and thus offered herself to him.” (Narrated by Imam Bukhari) (Bukhari, 1992).

Another story recorded in the hadith of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) reads:

أَحْبَبْنَا هَارُونَ بْنَ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ قَالَ حَدَّثَنَا مَعْنُ قَالَ حَدَّثَنَا مَالِكٌ عَنْ أَبِي حَارِثٍ عَنْ سَهْلِ بْنِ سَعْدٍ أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ جَاءَتْهُ امْرَأَةٌ فَقَالَتْ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ إِنِّي قَدْ وَهَبْتُ نَفْسِي لَكَ فَقَامَتِ قِيَامًا طَوِيلًا فَقَامَ رَجُلٌ فَقَالَ زَوِّجِيهَا إِنْ لَمْ يَكُنْ لَكَ بِهَا حَاجَةٌ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ هَلْ عِنْدَكَ شَيْءٌ قَالَ مَا أَجِدُ شَيْئًا قَالَ التَّمِيسُ وَلَوْ خَاتَمًا مِنْ حَدِيدٍ فَالْتَمَسَ فَلَمْ يَجِدْ شَيْئًا فَقَالَ لَهُ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ هَلْ مَعَكَ مِنَ الْقُرْآنِ شَيْءٌ قَالَ نَعَمْ سُورَةٌ كَذَا وَسُورَةٌ كَذَا لِسُورٍ سَمَّاهَا قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَدْ زَوَّجْتِكَهَا عَلَيَّ مَا مَعَكَ مِنَ الْقُرْآنِ

Translation: “From Sahl ibn Sa'd: A woman offered herself to the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him), and a man said to him: O Messenger of Allah, marry her to me. He said: What do you have? The man said: I have nothing. The Prophet said: Go and seek [a dowry], even if it is just an iron ring. He went and returned, saying: I could not find anything not even an iron ring but this garment of mine; half of it is for her. Sahl said: The man did not have an outer garment. The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said: What would she do with your garment? If you wear it, she has nothing to cover herself with, and if she wears it, you will have nothing left. The man sat down, and after sitting for some time, he stood up. The Prophet (peace be upon him) saw him turning away and called him. Then he asked: Do you know any part of the Qur'an? The man replied: Yes, I have memorized this and that surah, and he named them. The Prophet (peace be upon him) then said: I have married her to you with what you know of the Qur'an.” (Narrated by Imam Bukhari) (An-Nasa'i, 1991).

### **Cultural Perspectives on the Tradition of Women Proposing to Men in Lamongan**

In a typical marriage proposal, it is usually the man who proposes to the woman. However, in the village of Payaman, there exists a unique tradition not found in other regions, namely the tradition of women proposing to men. From the Islamic perspective, there is no strict requirement regarding which party should initiate the proposal; instead, it is recommended that a proposal be made to prevent future disappointment before establishing a household. In the field of ushul fiqh (principles of Islamic jurisprudence), the tradition of women proposing to men does not contradict religious tenets and falls under the category of 'urf shahih, which refers to customary practices upheld by society that do not conflict with scriptural texts (the

Qur'an and Hadith), do not negate benefit, and do not cause harm (Masduki, 2023).

Before the year 1854 CE, the tradition of women proposing to men had already been practiced by the people of Payaman Village. This tradition has been passed down through generations to the present day. However, there is no written record regarding the procedures of this tradition; instead, guidance is passed orally from elders. Therefore, when a woman proposes to a man, the process is carried out based on these unwritten customs. Upon closer examination, the tradition of women proposing to men shows similarities with the tales of Panji Laras-Panji Liris and Princess Andansari-Princess Andanwangi, which occurred around the year 1640 CE, as evidenced by the remains of a genuk (water pot) and a centani stone fan located in the courtyard of the Great Mosque of Lamongan, west of the town square. These tales reflect women initiating marriage proposals, but further analysis reveals that the tradition in Payaman Village predates these stories, as evidenced by the existence of the Raden Nur Rahmat Mosque (Kartika, 2023).

The Raden Nur Rahmat Mosque was established by Raden Nur Rahmat around the year 1561 CE, as indicated by the chronogram (*surya sengkala*) reading *gunaning seliro tirtu hayu*, which corresponds to the Saka year 1483 or 1561 CE. According to the people of Payaman Village, the mosque was a legacy of Queen Retno Kencono from Mantingan, Jepara, Central Java, and was relocated to Payaman by Raden Nur Rahmat. Due to his spiritual charisma (*karomah*), he is considered a *wali* (saint). After his passing in 1585 CE, a new tradition of pilgrimage (*nyekar*) to his grave began, known as *ngunjung*. *Ngunjung* is a parade-like procession around the village with the purpose of introducing the bride and groom to the community. This tradition predates Raden Nur Rahmat's time, suggesting that the practice of women proposing to men has existed since ancient times (Kartika, 2023).

Beyond these accounts, there is no definitive evidence explaining the exact origins of this tradition in Payaman. The absence of written documentation makes it difficult to determine when the practice began. Nonetheless, the community continues to uphold and preserve this tradition through generations. As time progresses, the tradition of women proposing to men has undergone cultural acculturation and now encompasses rich values. However, the community remains largely unaware of this, and the proposal process is often carried out briefly and practically to suit modern needs (Kartika, 2023).

In the tradition of women proposing to men in Payaman, the *mahr* (dowry) typically consists of money, a set of prayer items, livestock, or gold. The usual monetary dowry ranges from IDR 500,000 to IDR 1,000,000. However, there is no fixed amount, nor is there any coercion—it is given sincerely and according to the financial capability of the prospective groom. Another unique aspect of this tradition is the *melek'an* ceremony, where everyone stays awake throughout the night, a practice that has become customary. Additionally, *terbang jedor* (traditional drumming

performance) and selamatan (communal prayer meal) are held on the night before the wedding.

In the community of Solokuro Village, the act of proposing is more commonly referred to as lamaran. This term signifies a binding agreement between the couple, ensuring commitment until marriage. The people of Lamongan still observe the tradition of women proposing to men, and it has become deeply rooted in their culture. They do not consider it taboo or unusual; rather, it is a tradition passed down from one generation to the next. This practice remains highly respected, especially among residents in northern Lamongan and in rural areas (Mr. Habib, interview, 25 February 2024). Both Mr. Budiman and Mr. Habib stated that this tradition has existed since ancient times and does not diminish a woman's dignity. Instead, it is a heritage believed to bring blessings to future marriages (Mr. Habib and Mr. Budiman, interview, 25 February 2024). Furthermore, Mrs. Sholikah explained that this tradition strengthens familial ties and fosters closer relationships between the two families involved (Mrs. Sholikah, interview, 25 February 2024).

However, not all areas in Lamongan practice this tradition. In eastern Lamongan, for example, it is believed that men should be the ones to take the initiative in proposing marriage. They view the custom of women proposing to men—which is practiced in some parts of Lamongan—as diminishing the dignity and honor of women, and therefore do not adopt the tradition (Mr. Alwi, interview, 25 February 2024).

According to an interview with Mrs. Zaroh, the proposal process in Solokuro Village involves several steps. First is negesi, a confirmation process to ensure the man is willing to accept the woman's proposal. Second is the actual proposal (ngelamar), which includes bringing customary gifts such as tetel/gemblong, wingko, jenang, lemet, dodol, wajik, and pisang Raja (Mrs. Zaroh, interview, 25 February 2024). Additionally, gifts brought during the proposal (gawan) typically include sugar, coffee, fruits, and cigarettes (even if the groom is not a smoker) (Mrs. Fatimah, interview, 20 March 2021). The third stage is Gawe Dino, the determination of the wedding date.

In cultures where the tradition of women proposing is accepted and respected, this can strengthen a woman's position in the relationship and household. Women may feel more confident and responsible in building and maintaining their relationships.

This was affirmed in an interview with Mr. Muhammad, a community leader and academic from Payaman Village: “Empowering the role of women means enhancing their capacity and capability to participate actively and equally in all aspects of life, both in the public and private spheres. This is aimed at achieving gender equality and social justice” (Mr. Budiman, interview, 24 February 2024).

When asked why empowering women is important, Mr. Muhammad replied: “It is important for several reasons: first, women possess equal potential with men to

contribute to national development; second, women have the same rights as men to live prosperous and happy lives; third, empowering women can improve the quality of life of families and society as a whole” (Interview, 24 February 2024).

He continued by emphasizing the significance of women’s roles in the proposal process: “First, proposing is the initial step toward building an equitable marriage. By empowering women, they are granted more voice and choice in this process, ensuring marriages are founded on mutual respect and equality. Second, better communication—when women feel valued and included, the proposal process allows for more open and effective communication. This enables couples to discuss hopes, dreams, and concerns openly, laying a stronger foundation for a happy marriage.”

“Third, marriage is a lifelong commitment, and the decision to marry should be made jointly. Empowering women ensures they can participate actively in decisions regarding their own marriage. Fourth, avoiding harmful traditions—in some cultures, proposal practices disadvantage women. Empowerment helps challenge such traditions and promote fairer, more inclusive practices. Fifth, empowering women—giving women stronger roles in proposals is a key step toward broader empowerment, enhancing their confidence and decision-making abilities in their lives” (Interview, 24 February 2024).

When asked how to concretely strengthen women’s roles in proposing to men, Mr. Muhammad answered: “Through education and awareness—raising understanding about gender equality and women’s rights in marriage. Open dialogue—encouraging open discussions between men and women about their expectations and concerns. Family and community support—encouraging families and communities to support women in making decisions regarding marriage. Transforming traditions—collaborating to change proposal customs that harm women and promote fairer practices” (Interview, 24 February 2024).

### **The Tradition of Women Proposing to Men in Gandusari Village, Gandusari, Trenggalek**

Marriage proposal (khitbah) is a preliminary step before the marriage contract takes place, intended to allow both parties to get to know each other, thereby gaining confidence in proceeding to marriage. In Java, it is generally the man who proposes to the woman. However, there are also instances where the woman proposes to the man, such as in Minangkabau culture, which adheres to a matrilineal kinship system—one that traces descent through the mother. This contrasts with patrilineal systems found in regions such as Java, Batak, Gayo, and Lampung, which trace descent through the father (Soerojo, W, 1995: 109).

The practice of women initiating marriage proposals has become a cultural tradition in Gandusari Village, Gandusari Subdistrict, Trenggalek Regency. One of the reasons behind this tradition is to ensure that their daughters find life partners who

are well-mannered and possess good character and understanding. The people of Jatisari still strongly uphold the traditions inherited from their ancestors and are apprehensive about abandoning them. The practice of women proposing to men is locally known as *ngemblong* (a traditional sticky rice cake), which carries the philosophical symbolism of unity in marriage—like the inseparable grains of sticky rice. (Interview, 27 February 2024).

In this proposal tradition, several ceremonial stages are involved: *njaluk* (requesting the man to become a life partner), *ganjur* (the woman officially proposes to the man), *milih dino* (choosing an auspicious day), and the wedding ceremony itself. During *njaluk*, the bride's parents formally request the groom's family to accept their daughter's proposal. Afterward, the *ganjur* stage takes place, where the woman formally proposes, followed by a response from the groom's side a few days later. Upon mutual agreement, both families proceed with the wedding arrangements, culminating in the marriage ceremony. This tradition embodies important social values, particularly the act of women proposing, which is viewed as a form of respect toward men. Moreover, it emphasizes the expectation that men should care for and appreciate women, as women are also capable of contributing positively to men's lives. Accordingly, if a man merely depends on a woman for sustenance and fails to maintain a stable household, his social standing will be perceived negatively, which could affect his reputation in the broader community. (Interview, 27 February 2024).

### **Islamic Legal Perspective on the Tradition of Women Proposing to Men in Trenggalek**

The tradition of women proposing to men has been passed down from the ancestors. In the Gandusari area of Trenggalek, the proposal process begins with the woman proposing to the man. This practice has continued since the tragic tale of *Ande-Ande Lumut* and *Klenting Kuning*. Therefore, this tradition is preserved as a form of honoring and respecting the ancestors. The people of Gandusari Village do not simply accept the tradition without thoughtful consideration. The researcher interviewed a local community figure, Mr. Narimo, who stated: "Here, the custom is like this, sir—the woman proposes to the man. From a religious standpoint, the conditions are: the man must not be in someone else's engagement, must not be in the *iddah* (waiting) period, and there must be no other obstacles, such as being close blood relatives." (Narimo, Interview, Gandusari, 26 February 2024). Mr. Narimo further explained another requirement for a proposal according to the people of Gandusari: "Apart from the conditions I mentioned earlier, the custom in Gandusari is that a proposal must include *jadah*."

*Jadah*, a traditional food made from glutinous rice mixed with grated coconut and pounded together, is an essential part of the proposal process. It is a mandatory item that symbolizes the proposal itself. Regarding this, Mr. Narimo continued his explanation: "*Jadah* is a requirement and a symbol of a proposal in Gandusari, sir,

because jadah is sticky. The elders say that this stickiness symbolizes the hope that the couple will stay together for a long time in their married life.” (Narimo, Interview, Gandusari, 26 February 2024)

A similar statement was made by Mr. Pajar, who said: “Yes, sir, it must be included, because jadah is a symbol of the proposal. Here we call it sisetan or jadahan. Why must jadah be included? Because its meaning is tied to being a food made from sticky rice, and according to the elders, its stickiness symbolizes lasting togetherness.” (Pajar, Interview, Gandusari, 26 February 2024)

The researcher also asked about the Islamic ruling on this tradition, as well as what other items are considered mandatory in the proposal process. This was addressed by another village elder and Aisiyah activist in Gandusari, Mr. Khoiri. The researcher continued by asking about other proposal requirements besides jadah. This was answered by Mr. Tarno, another elder in Gandusari Village, who stated: “In addition to jadah, other proposal requirements here include jadah jenang (a type of rice porridge), a bowl of bananas, glutinous or husked rice, whole coconuts, and red sugar. All of these are part of the proposal procession, sir. There is also an offering called pujonggo or berjonggo.”(Tarno, Interview, Gandusari, 26 February 2024)

The researcher then asked again about the Islamic ruling regarding this form of proposal and the items involved in the process. The response from Mr. Khoiri, a village elder and Aisiyah activist in Gandusari, is as follows:

Mr. Khoiri explained a hadith of the Prophet which reads:

حَدَّثَنَا أَبُو التُّعْمَانِ حَدَّثَنَا حَمَّادُ بْنُ زَيْدٍ عَنْ أَبِي حَازِمٍ عَنْ سَهْلِ بْنِ سَعْدٍ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ أَنَّ امْرَأَةً أَتَتْ النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فَعَرَضَتْ عَلَيْهِ نَفْسَهَا فَقَالَ مَا لِي الْيَوْمَ فِي الْبِسَاءِ مِنْ حَاجَةٍ فَقَالَ رَجُلٌ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ زَوِّجْنِيهَا قَالَ مَا عِنْدَكَ قَالَ مَا عِنْدِي شَيْءٌ قَالَ أَعْطَهَا وَلَوْ خَاتَمًا مِنْ حَدِيدٍ قَالَ مَا عِنْدِي شَيْءٌ قَالَ فَمَا عِنْدَكَ مِنَ الْقُرْآنِ قَالَ كَذَا وَكَذَا قَالَ فَقَدْ مَلَكَتُهَا بِمَا مَعَكَ مِنَ الْقُرْآنِ

Translation: "From Sahal bin Sa'ad, a woman offered herself to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), and a man said to him, “O Messenger of Allah, marry her to me.” He asked, “What do you have?” The man said, “I have nothing.” The Prophet said, “Go and find something, even if it is an iron ring.” The man went and then returned and said, “No, by Allah, I found nothing, not even an iron ring. But this is my lower garment (izar), half of it is for her.” Sahal said, “The man did not have a shawl.” The Prophet said, “What can you do with your garment? If you wear it, it covers nothing of her, and if she wears it, it covers nothing of you.” The man sat down, and after sitting for a long time, he stood up. The Prophet saw him and called him back. When he came, the Prophet asked, “Do you have any memorized portion of the Qur’an?” The man said, “I have memorized this surah and that surah,” mentioning some surahs. Then the Prophet said, “We have married her to you with what you have of the Qur’an (i.e., your memorization).” (Narrated by Imam Bukhari).

## **Cultural Perspectives on the Tradition of Women Proposing to Men in Trenggalek**

Local traditions are customs that develop and are recognized by the local community. These traditions are typically passed down from generation to generation (Abidin, Yusuf Zainal, and Beni Ahmad Saebani, 2020). Local traditions began to develop in Indonesia during the era of the kingdoms. Local traditions can be categorized into Culture, which refers to traditions based on ethnic groups, professions, regions, or areas—for example, Sundanese traditions (Abidin, Yusuf Zainal, and Beni Ahmad Saebani, 2020).

Subculture refers to specific traditions within a culture that do not contradict the parent culture, such as the tradition of mutual cooperation (*gotong royong*). Counter-culture refers to derivative traditions from a culture that contradict the parent culture, such as the tradition of individualism (Abidin, Yusuf Zainal, and Beni Ahmad Saebani, 2020).

ChatGPT bilang:

In today's era, with the rapid development of information technology and social media, the interpretation of local traditions has become increasingly important. The increasingly intense contact between traditions through digital platforms allows for cultural accommodation and acculturation.

Due to this intense cultural interaction, local traditions often adapt to accommodate social changes. Social media enables the rapid exchange of cultural ideas and practices, which are then integrated into local traditions. For instance, traditional celebrations in Solokuro may incorporate new elements learned from other cultures while still preserving the core of the tradition. In the strategically located subdistrict of Solokuro in Lamongan, the development of technology has made the local culture and way of thinking more diverse. Local traditions have several significant functions in this context (Nawari, 2011).

First, they serve as a meeting point for community members from various backgrounds. Second, they function as social norms that regulate the attitudes and behaviors of the community. Third, they act as social control for each member of society. Fourth, they provide assurance for tradition supporters in terms of socio-economic value. Local traditions help maintain peace and harmony within the community..

The proposal tradition in Gandusari Village, Gandusari Subdistrict, Trenggalek Regency, differs from the common practice, where usually the man proposes to the woman. In this case, it is the woman who proposes to the man. Although there is no formal rule stating that a man must be the one to propose, this custom has been practiced since the legendary story of *Ande Ande Lumut* and *Klenting Kuning*. Therefore, the tradition has been preserved as a form of respect and honor toward the ancestors. (Widyanti, 2022)

However, this tradition seems unusual and different from the general norms of



society, where most communities expect that the proposal (khitbah) is conducted by the man. It is also usually carried out according to customary practices prevalent in a particular society. Regarding this practice, the researcher interviewed Mr. Mawan, a community leader of Gandusari Village, who stated: "Yes, the proposal here follows what has been done for generations, sir. It is indeed the woman who proposes to the man." (Mr. Mawan, Interview, Gandusari, February 27, 2024)

In practice, the proposal tradition in Gandusari Village confirms that it is the woman who proposes to the man, not the other way around as commonly seen in other regions. In Gandusari, proposals must be initiated by the woman. The exact historical origin of this tradition in Gandusari is unclear, but it has become a long-standing custom among the locals and is considered obligatory when planning a marriage proposal. Regarding the background of this tradition, the researcher asked Mr. Tarno, an elder of Gandusari Village, who said: "I don't really know the history, sir. This tradition already existed before I was born, and it has been passed down from generation to generation." (Mr. Tarno, Interview, Gandusari, February 27, 2024).

He also added: "The tradition of women proposing to men, sir, is also to honor our ancestors who had practiced this and made it a pre-marriage tradition." (Mr. Tarno, Interview, Gandusari, February 27, 2024)

The tradition of women proposing in Gandusari Village is a hereditary practice passed down from previous generations. Although the exact origin is unknown, the community of Gandusari has embraced it as a custom that continues to this day. The people of Gandusari do not see this tradition as degrading men for being proposed to by women; on the contrary, it is a highly respected custom. Mr. Mawan explained: "This tradition of women proposing does not belittle men; in fact, it elevates women because it clarifies their position." (Mr. Mawan, Interview, Gandusari, February 27, 2024)

During the proposal ceremony where women propose to men, several family members and community figures are present. Their presence serves as a public acknowledgment that the couple has undergone a proposal and will proceed toward marriage. Mr. Pajar noted: "Those who attend the proposal event include family from both sides, relatives, village elders, and cultural leaders. Usually, only the men attend, sir, the women often do not." (Mr. Pajar, Interview, Gandusari, February 27, 2024)

The procedure of a female-initiated proposal in Gandusari involves the woman's family visiting the man's house to express their intentions. Once the purpose is stated, a 'rembuk dinten' or day-setting discussion is held to choose the wedding date.

The chosen wedding day is usually based on the family's request and selected auspicious dates. The 'rembuk dinten' during the proposal is conducted by a 'Pujonggo' or 'berjonggo'—a title for a respected elder with deep knowledge of Javanese customary law and entrusted with handling important matters. Mr. Narimo

elaborated: “The Pujonggo or berjonggo is someone trusted with important matters like proposals. Their presence is crucial because they are the ones who determine the right day for the wedding.” (Mr. Narimo, Interview, Gandusari, February 27, 2024)

The Pujonggo is responsible for determining the wedding day during the female proposal process, a step known as jejer jarak, which refers to the time gap between the proposal and the wedding. There is no fixed duration for this gap. Mr. Mawan said: “There’s no time limit, sir. It depends on the families. The date is chosen according to their weton (Javanese birth calendar) and the most auspicious day.” (Mr. Mawan, Interview, Gandusari, February 27, 2024)

The jejer jarak period is generally based on the family’s preference but is ultimately decided by the Pujonggo. To determine the wedding date, the Pujonggo uses old coins, called duwit gobok, and calculates using the weton of both parties. Mr. Tarno explained: “The jejer jarak, sir, is done using old coins, duwit gobok, to calculate both parties’ weton. Only the Pujonggo knows how to do this.” (Mr. Tarno, Interview, Gandusari, February 27, 2024)

The people of Gandusari do not view the tradition of women proposing as demeaning to men. On the contrary, it is seen as honorable. Mr. Mawan emphasized: “This tradition does not degrade men because it has been practiced for generations. Whether we like it or not, we must follow it. It has become a norm and is considered normal. We in Gandusari do not feel that men are disrespected—in fact, we highly respect this tradition.” (Mr. Mawan, Interview, Gandusari, February 27, 2024)

The time between the proposal and the wedding can range from three to six months. During this waiting period, the proposal is not yet considered binding. It serves only as an engagement. Mr. Tarno explained: “It’s not binding, sir. It can still be canceled. It’s like an introduction. If it works out, they continue. If not, they stop. But we always hope and pray the proposal leads to marriage, because marriage is an act of worship.” (Mr. Tarno, Interview, Gandusari, February 27, 2024)

The proposal, or sisetan, is not legally binding and can be canceled if incompatibility or other issues arise. Mr. Mino, a village official, explained: “The proposal or sisetan carries no legal consequences. It’s not binding and can be canceled due to incompatibility or other reasons, like modern youth issues.” (Mr. Mino, Interview, Gandusari, February 27, 2024)

Some couples believe that after the proposal, marriage is guaranteed. As a result, behaviors typically reserved for married couples occur—such as staying over at each other’s homes, sharing a bed, or being physically intimate—leading to potential pregnancy before marriage. This violates religious and social norms. Mr. Pajar, a participant in the female-initiated proposal, stated: “Such behaviors are actually not allowed, sir. Staying over is fine as long as they don’t sleep together. Because a proposal doesn’t guarantee marriage. Proposal doesn’t always lead to marriage.” (Mr. Pajar, Interview, Gandusari, February 27, 2024)

However, many parents and engaged couples assume that they are already bound by a strong commitment, justifying behaviors that should not occur before marriage. They believe the proposal is serious and unlikely to be canceled. Mr. Mino stated: “Here, a proposal is already considered serious. People think it definitely leads to marriage, even though legally there's no binding agreement, only the status of having undergone *sisetan*.” (Mr. Mino, Interview, Gandusari, February 27, 2024)

Because of such beliefs, both parties sometimes assume that the proposal itself creates a binding commitment, leading to behaviors that should be avoided. As Mr. Mawan put it: “The proposal does not legally bind either party, sir. It's only the first step toward marriage, and it carries no legal consequences—so they may act as though they're already husband and wife.” (Mr. Mawan, Interview, Gandusari, February 27, 2024)

According to Mr. Mawan, this deviation stems from parental trust and lack of religious understanding: “It's because of the parents' trust in their children. They should forbid such actions. Also, the children lack religious knowledge, so the parents allow it. And the youth today don't pay enough attention to religious norms or social customs.” (Mr. Mawan, Interview, Gandusari, February 27, 2024)

From the interviews conducted, several factors influence the evolving perceptions of engagement in Gandusari, including parental trust that their children are mature enough, and a lack of religious understanding, which causes misconceptions to persist.

### **The Implications of the Tradition of Women Proposing to Men on Household Harmony in Payaman Village, Solokuro District, Lamongan Regency, and Gandusari Village, Gandusari District, Trenggalek Regency**

The tradition of women proposing to men can have various implications for household harmony, depending on the cultural context and existing values. The following are some possible implications (Husin, 2020).

#### **1. Empowerment of Women's Roles**

In cultures where the tradition of women proposing to men is considered normal or even appreciated, it can strengthen the role of women in relationships and households. Women may feel more confident and carry a greater sense of responsibility in building and maintaining the relationship.

As stated by Mr. Muhammad, a community leader and academic from Payaman Village:

“Empowering the role of women is an effort to enhance their capacity and capability to actively and equally participate in various aspects of life, both in the public and private spheres. This aims to achieve gender equality and social justice.” (Muhammad, Payaman Lamongan, 24 February 2024).

He continued by emphasizing that the empowerment of women in the context of proposing is highly important for several reasons:

"The first reason is that engagement is the initial step in building an equitable marriage. By strengthening the role of women, they gain a greater voice and more choices in the process. This helps ensure that the marriage is based on mutual respect and equality.

Second, better communication. When women feel more appreciated and involved, communication during the engagement process becomes more open and effective. This allows the couple to discuss their hopes, dreams, and concerns more freely, thereby building a stronger foundation for a happy marriage."

"Third, marriage is a lifelong commitment, and the decision to marry should be made jointly by both parties. Strengthening the role of women ensures that they have the opportunity to actively participate in decision-making related to their marriage. Fourth, avoiding harmful traditions. In some cultures, there are engagement practices that disadvantage women. Strengthening the role of women helps to challenge these traditions and promote a more fair and inclusive engagement process. Fifth, empowering women: Giving women a stronger role in engagement is an important step in empowering them overall. It enhances their confidence and ability to make decisions in their own lives."

(Muhammad, Payaman Lamongan, 24 February 2024).

The researcher asked about concrete ways to strengthen the role of women in proposing marriage to men?

Through education and awareness, by increasing understanding of the importance of gender equality and women's rights in marriage. Open dialogue, by encouraging open discussions between women and men about their expectations and concerns regarding marriage. Family and community support, by encouraging families and communities to support women in making decisions related to their marriage. Tradition change, by working together to transform proposal traditions that disadvantage women and promote fairer practices. (Muhammad, Payaman Lamongan, 24 February 2024).

## 2. Balance of Power

The tradition of women proposing can help create a balance of power in relationships. This is because women have the same initiative in choosing their life partners. It can encourage a more balanced and mutually respectful partnership between husband and wife. As stated by Mrs. Zaroh, an Aisyiyah activist and academic from Payaman Village:

"Women have an equally important role as men in choosing a life partner. Women

have the right to choose a partner whom they believe can be a good husband and bring them happiness. This does not mean that women want to dominate or disrespect men."

Mr. Slamet and Mrs. Zaroh got married in 1993, and the proposal came from the woman's side. Here is Mrs. Zaroh's statement:

"It was my family who proposed, sir, because my parents still followed the traditions passed down from my grandmother's time. If the proposal came from the man's side, it would be fine too. I just followed my parents' wishes." (Mr. Slamet and Mrs. Zaroh, 2024).

Mrs. Zaroh's statement reflects that her parents were still upholding the customs passed down through generations. It didn't matter whether the proposal came from the man or the woman, as she simply followed her parents' decisions. In their household, however, there was a role reversal. According to Mrs. Zaroh, the wife of Mr. Slamet: "My husband works as a driver, but unfortunately, he has very few customers because of low demand. So when he's not working, he stays at home, cleans, and sometimes cooks simple meals for the children before school. As for me, I work taking care of other people's children to meet our household needs. During family discussions, my opinion must be accepted, because my husband's suggestions are often unconvincing." (Sukimin and Mrs. Zaroh, Payaman Village, 2024).

Based on Mrs. Zaroh's account, she is the breadwinner of the family since her husband's job does not generate a steady income. During decision-making, she tends to prioritize her own opinions and does not value her husband's input, showing a lack of respect for his role as the head of the household.

### 3. Improved Communication

When women take an active role in the proposal process, it can encourage more open and honest communication between partners. A woman's active involvement in the proposal can help the couple understand each other better and build a strong foundation for their relationship. As explained by Mas Muhammad: Certainly, women can take an active role in communication in several ways, including (Muhammad and Mbak Ervi, Payaman Lamongan, February 24, 2024)

1. Expressing desires and expectations: Women have the right to express their desires and expectations regarding marriage and household life to their prospective partner and his family.
2. Asking questions: Women can ask questions to the prospective partner and his family to obtain more complete information about them.
3. Voicing opinions: Women have the right to voice their opinions on various matters related to marriage and family life.
4. Seeking joint solutions: Women can work together with the prospective partner and his family to find the best solutions to various problems that may arise during

the proposal process.

Muhammad and Ervi were married in 2016, and they are considered a relatively young couple in terms of marriage duration. Before getting married, they had been in a relationship (dating) for three years. According to Muhammad, the reason the proposal was initiated by the woman was: "It was my wife who proposed to me, because her parents were worried that I wouldn't marry her. They were also concerned that sins might occur since we had been dating for a long time. So my wife came to my parents to clarify our relationship through marriage, even though I'm not from Japan." (Muhammad and Ervi, Lamongan, February 22, 2024).

According to Muhammad, the proposal was initiated due to the concern over potential immoral behavior involving their child. Regarding the roles of husband and wife in this proposal practice, Muhammad explained: "My role as a husband is as the head of the household, and I have the responsibility to provide for my wife. I work as an employee at PCC. As the head of the family, my wife must follow the decisions I make. If she doesn't follow them, then it's the same as defying me as the head of the household." (Muhammad and Ervi, Payaman Village, Lamongan, February 22, 2024).

Muhammad's explanation shows that in discussions, the husband does not allow freedom of thought; the wife must follow the husband's orders as the head of the household and is not allowed to oppose him. As a result of this behavior, the wife does not have openness in expressing her opinions.

## **CONCLUSION**

Based on the research findings involving interviews, documentation, and observation as discussed in the previous chapter, the following conclusions can be drawn:

1. In Payaman Village, Lamongan, and Gandusari Village, Trenggalek, the practice of women proposing to men—known as “reverse proposal” or “women proposing”—does occur, although it is rare compared to the opposite. This practice may arise in more inclusive cultures or for specific reasons. Some cultures, such as matrilineal societies, allow women to initiate proposals. The reasons behind this practice may vary, including cultural, social, economic, or personal factors. A woman may feel confident enough to propose due to self-assurance, compatibility with the partner, or because the man has not taken the initiative. Although uncommon in patriarchal societies, cultural shifts may allow women to take the initiative, and this practice may evolve over time. In Payaman Village, Payaman District, Lamongan Regency, a woman proposing to a man is not seen as a burden, but rather as a responsibility and a customary obligation, driven also by the fear of being perceived as incapable if she does not do so.
2. In Islamic law, *khitbah* (proposal) is part of the marriage process that is generally performed by a man toward a woman. The requirements of *khitbah*

are explained in the Compilation of Islamic Law (KHI), and proposals are typically addressed to women who are virgins or widows whose iddah period has ended. However, there is no prohibition against women initiating khitbah toward men. Some hadiths note that women once offered themselves in marriage to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) or to pious men, and this is permissible. Nonetheless, there is no explicit command or prohibition in the Qur'an or Hadith regarding proposals made by women.

3. The implications of the tradition of women proposing to men for household harmony include: Strengthening the Role of Women, Power Balance, Improved Communication, Enhanced Marriage Quality, and Social Adjustment. This practice can provide opportunities for women to strengthen their role and create balance in relationships. However, it may also cause conflict if not accepted within certain cultural contexts.

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