

## Economic Underpinnings of Early Marriage: The Tengka Tradition among the Madurese

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### ABSTRACT

The minimum age for marriage has been established in Indonesian law. However, modern society in Madura often disregards these regulations. As a result, the phenomenon of early marriage remains prevalent among the society. Many researchers argue that early marriage is primarily influenced by cultural practices. However, this study identifies the occurrence of early marriage as being driven by the economic transactions embedded within marriage process. This economic aspect is referred to as the *tengka* tradition. This research examines the *tengka* tradition as an economic narrative underlying the resilience of early marriage in traditional Madurese society. Using a qualitative approach, data were collected descriptively through in-depth interviews with traditional leaders, religious figures (*kiai*), and individuals involved in underage marriages. The findings reveal that the resilience of early marriage is not primarily due to cultural or religious factors but is instead driven by the economic determination encapsulated in the *tengka* tradition. This economic determination manifests as asset accumulation through symbolic marriage transactions and as investment in the family's future. The *tengka* tradition emerges as a significant factor that reshapes the 'legal disobedience' in the society, overshadowing elements such as religion and culture. It plays a crucial role in ensuring the social and economic stability of families and communities.

[Usia minimum pernikahan telah diatur dalam undang-undang Indonesia. Namun, masyarakat modern di Madura sering mengabaikan peraturan tersebut. Akibatnya, fenomena pernikahan dini masih marak terjadi di masyarakat. Banyak peneliti berpendapat bahwa pernikahan dini dipengaruhi terutama oleh praktik budaya. Namun, penelitian ini mengidentifikasi terjadinya pernikahan dini sebagai akibat dari transaksi ekonomi yang sengaja dilestarikan dalam proses pernikahan. Aspek ekonomi ini dikenal dengan tradisi tengka. Penelitian ini mengkaji tradisi tengka sebagai narasi ekonomi yang mendorong

terjadinya pernikahan dini dalam masyarakat Madura. Menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif, data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara mendalam dengan pemimpin tradisional, tokoh agama (kia), dan individu yang terlibat dalam pernikahan di bawah umur. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa eksistensi pernikahan dini bukanlah semata-mata disebabkan oleh faktor budaya atau agama, melainkan dipengaruhi oleh praktik ekonomi yang terwujud dalam tradisi tengka. Faktor ekonomi ini membentuk akumulasi aset melalui transaksi pernikahan simbolik dan sebagai investasi untuk masa depan keluarga. Tradisi tengka muncul sebagai faktor penting yang melestarikan 'ketidakpatuhan hukum' dalam masyarakat terkait batas minimum usia perkawinan, mengalahkan elemen-elemen seperti agama dan budaya. Tradisi ini dilakukan karena memainkan peran krusial dalam memastikan stabilitas ekonomi keluarga serta eksistensi dalam komunitas.]

#### KEYWORDS

*Tengka* tradition, economy, early marriage, Madura

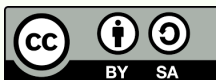
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## Introduction

The phenomenon of early marriage in Madura is particularly unique. Despite the implementation of reforms to raise the legal marriage age, the Madurese community persists in maintaining their traditions and resists these changes.<sup>1</sup> The community ignores state regulations on marriage age limits (Law No. 16 of 2019) and maintains classical custom. The retention of the old tradition of the Madura community is due to a strong religious understanding and obedience to the ulama figure.<sup>2</sup> Religiosity, according to the Madura community, is based on the textuality of the Qur'an. The concept of baligh, for the community, cannot be regulated by the

<sup>1</sup> Netty Dyah Kurniasari, Emy Susanti, and Yuyun Wahyu Izzati Surya, *Motives, Messages, and Media in the Process of Child Marriage in Madura*, vol. 2 (Atlantis Press SARL, 2024), [https://doi.org/10.2991/978-2-38476-118-0\\_164](https://doi.org/10.2991/978-2-38476-118-0_164).

<sup>2</sup> Agoes Dariyo, Mia Hadiati, and R. Rahaditya, "Why Is the Tradition of Youth Married Sustained in the Madura Region?," *Proceedings of the International Conference on Economics, Business, Social, and Humanities (ICEBSH 2021)* 570, no. Icebsh (2021): 126–30, <https://doi.org/10.2991/assehr.k.210805.020>.

state, but has been determined by God in the Quran.<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, the ulama are played as *waritsatul ambiya'* (heirs of the Prophets) who control and create cultural brokers of law.<sup>4</sup> These two social pillars sustain the practice of early marriage within Madura society, amidst the renewal of marriage law.

Early marriage tradition is influenced by a very strong economic element, a tradition called *tengka*. There are two economic inputs into early marriage, namely: first, the *qard al-hasan* transaction—a social contract that accepts the provision of goods or money at the time of someone else's wedding reception and is returned when the child himself holds a wedding reception.<sup>5</sup> This receivable is what causes early marriage. Parents want it returned immediately. Secondly, marrying off children at an early age can bring in economic capital, due to the typology of the community that brings *tengka* to married families. Marriage is used as a means of borrowing business capital from others, and is repaid partially. This is what is explored in this study, how economic determination through the *tengka* tradition in maintaining early marriage in Madura society.

To what extent does the economy influence the resilience of Madura culture and its belief in early marriage? What specific aspects of the economy contribute to this influence? Weber, in his work *The Protestant Ethic*, argued that Germany's economic development was driven by the ethical values embedded in Protestantism, particularly in business practices. This integration of religious ethics into economic activity demonstrates how economic factors can shape cultural and religious beliefs. Similarly, examining the relationship between economic conditions and early marriage in Madura could provide valuable insights into how economic structures sustain cultural practices.<sup>6</sup> As-Shiddiqi argues that legal norms are closely linked to socio-economic factors, including religion and

<sup>3</sup> Tolib Effendi and Rusmilawati Windari, "Illegal Levies as a Negative Element Contributing to The Decrease of The Tourism Potential on Madura," *International Journal of Business, Economics, and Social Development* 3, no. 1 (2022): 45–52, <https://doi.org/10.46336/ijbesd.v3i1.172>.

<sup>4</sup> Agung Ali Fahmi et al., "The Implementation of Islamic Value Absorption in Regional Regulations on Districts at Madura Abstract : Keywords : Abstrak : Kata Kunci : Introduction The Establishment and Implementation of Sharia Law in Madura Are Mainly Because Madurese People Have Lo," *Al-Ihkam: Jurnal Hukum Dan Pranata Sosial* 15, no. 1 (2020): 153–72, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.19105/al-lhkam.v15i1.2682>.

<sup>5</sup> Yudho Bawono, "Early Marriage of Madurese Women: A Case Study," *INSPIRA: Indonesian Journal of Psychological Research* 4, no. 1 (2023): 62–69, <https://doi.org/10.32505/inspira.v4i1.5820>.

<sup>6</sup> Abd. Basir et al., "Support for Islamic Understanding from Families Information of Piety for The Millennial Generation," *Nazhruna: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 4, no. 2 (2021): 434–46, <https://doi.org/10.31538/nzh.v4i2.1603>.

culture.<sup>7</sup> The economy within every religious legal system and, in many cases, serves as a fundamental entity shaping legal principles and practices.<sup>8</sup>

Previous research has not examined the economy as a determinant factor in the phenomenon of early marriage. Hariyati concluded that early marriage is primarily driven by the principle of religious preservation (*hifz ad-dīn*), as it is believed to prevent violations of divine law.<sup>9</sup> Early marriage has been practiced as a religious tradition. The emphasis is placed not on age but on the attainment of *baligh* (maturity), rather than a specific minimum age.<sup>10</sup>

Based on interviews with religious figures (*kiai*) and individuals involved in early marriage in Madura, this study begins by examining the characteristics of early marriage through a religious lens. Religiosity serves as a reflection of the sociological dimensions of law, and an in-depth analysis of religiosity is essential to uncover the underlying philosophy within the context of living law. The study then presents findings on economic determination in the persistence of early marriage, particularly through the long-standing *tengka* tradition. In the final discussion, the economic determinants of early marriage are analyzed.

## Madurase Marriage Culture: an Overview

Madura is an archipelago consisting of four districts: Bangkalan, Sampang, Pamekasan, and Sumenep. Geographically, the region is characterized by a hot climate, limestone soil, and limited forest coverage, which accounts for only 6% of the island's total area. With a land area of 5,304 km<sup>2</sup> and an average population density of 561.8 people per km<sup>2</sup>, Madura faces significant socio-economic challenges.<sup>11</sup> Due to the arid and barren landscape, the livelihood of the Madurese people largely depends on agricultural activities. From a social perspective, the island's geographical conditions have contributed to the development of a resilient and tenacious character among its inhabitants.

The people of Madura are known for their strong religious observance and deep adherence to religious traditions, which influence their attitudes and decision-making in various aspects of life. Religion serves as a fundamental

<sup>7</sup> Arif Sugitanata, Siti Aminah, and Ahmad Muhasim, "LIVING LAW AND WOMEN EMPOWERMENT: Weaving Skills as a Marriage Requirement in Sade, West Nusa Tenggara," *Al-Ahwal: Jurnal Hukum Keluarga Islam* 15, no. 1 (2022): 144–61, <https://doi.org/10.14421/ahwal.2022.15108>.

<sup>8</sup> Nurliana Nurliana et al., "Second Puberty in Marriage Islamic Family Law Perspective," *International Journal of Islamic Thought and Humanities* 2, no. 1 (2023): 01–11, <https://doi.org/10.54298/ijith.v2i1.55>.

<sup>9</sup> Sri Hariati and Haeratun, "Study on the Granting of Marriage License to Civil Servants," *International Journal of Integrative Sciences* 2, no. 8 (2023): 1319–30, <https://doi.org/10.55927/ijis.v2i8.5672>.

<sup>10</sup> Salma Salma, Hasanatul Wahida, and Muhammad Adib bin Samsudin, "IGNORING FAMILY LAW ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE: Falsifying Death of Spouses for the Registration of New Marriage in Lengayang Muslim Community," *Al-Ahwal: Jurnal Hukum Keluarga Islam* 15, no. 1 (2022): 1–20, <https://doi.org/10.14421/ahwal.2022.15101>.

<sup>11</sup> Kuntowijoyo, *Social Change in An Agrarian Society: Madura 1850-1940*, terj. Mochmoed Effendhie dan Punang Amaripuja, *Perubahan Sosial dalam Masyarakat Madura: 1850-1940* (Yogyakarta: Matabangsa, 2002), 27.

foundation for political, social, economic, and cultural activities.<sup>12</sup> The religious understanding among the Madurese has reached a highly developed level, characterized by unwavering commitment and obedience. However, this strong devotion can, at times, manifest as religious fanaticism.

The marriage culture in Madura is deeply sacred, encompassing social, economic, and religious dimensions. The sanctity of marriage traditions in Madura is so deeply ingrained that it has evolved into a cultural institution, with each cultural aspect carrying profound sacred values.<sup>13</sup> As a result, marriage in Madura is not easily dissolved, as its significance extends beyond personal relationships to deeply embedded economic and social structures. This strong marital bond is reinforced by economic considerations, making it remarkably resilient over time. Marriage in Madura is not merely a social or economic arrangement but, fundamentally, a religious institution.

The logic of Madura's marriage culture is deeply sacred and manifests in three key forms. First, religious culture plays a fundamental role. The Madurese people are known for their strong adherence to Islam, their firm commitment to religious principles, and their dedication to upholding ancestral traditions. In Madura, religion is not solely derived from formal teachings by *ustadz*, teachers, or *kiai*; it is also deeply intertwined with tradition. These traditions, regarded as extensions of religious rituals, are believed to bring blessings and ensure salvation in the afterlife.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, religious knowledge and understanding serve as symbols of family honor. A strong foundation in religious teachings enhances social standing, while a lack of religious knowledge can hinder one's ability to attain a respected position in the community.

Marriage in Madura is regarded as an essential ritual for achieving religious perfection. Men and women who remain unmarried are considered religiously incomplete. Similarly, within a family, those who fail to maintain marital stability and experience divorce are perceived as having brought shame upon themselves and their families.<sup>15</sup> Divorce is seen as a failure to uphold religious obligations and a rejection of the *sunnah* of the Prophet, making it a source of social disgrace. In this context, marriage serves as both a symbol of honor and religious fulfillment, while divorce represents social stigma and deviation from societal norms. This

<sup>12</sup> Tabrani ZA, "The Theological Transformation of Indonesian Democratic Politics. (Telaah Singkat Tentang Masyarakat Madani Dalam Wacana Pluralisme Agama Di Indonesia)," *AL-IJTIMA': International Journal of Government and Social Science* 2, no. 1 (2016).

<sup>13</sup> Nurfitriani Nurfitriani, Suparman Abdullah, and Buchari Mengge, "Conflict and Violence among Religious People: A Case Study of Conflict and Violence Against the Ahmadiyah Congregation in Makassar City," *International Journal of Multicultural and Multireligious Understanding* 7, no. 11 (January 2, 2021): 497, <https://doi.org/10.18415/ijmmu.v7i11.2280>.

<sup>14</sup> Limas Dodi, "POWER-BASED ECONOMIC POLITICS IN PERSATUAN ISLAM (PERSIS) IN SAPEKEN, SUMENEP-MADURA," *Madania: Jurnal Kajian Keislaman* 25, no. 1 (2021): 14, <http://dx.doi.org/10.29300/madania.v25i1.4226>.

<sup>15</sup> Zakiyah Zakiyah, "Manuscripts in Sumenep Madura; the Legacy of Pesantren and Its Ulama," *Heritage of Nusantara: International Journal of Religious Literature and Heritage* 6, no. 1 (June 30, 2017): 21-42, <https://doi.org/10.31291/hn.v6i1.133>.

deeply embedded socio-religious sacredness reinforces the resilience of marriage in Madurese culture.

Marriage is an order from God and His Messenger, not getting married means denying the order from God and His Messenger. Even though they are graduates of university, their Islamic religion is not perfect if they are not married. Moreover, not getting married until old age is usually considered unmanly, not religiously observant. Divorce is a disgrace for Muslims, as it is a bad religious behaviour. Even though Allah allows it, it is hated. Hated by Allah means that the religion is not perfect. *Kiai-kiai* and *ustadz*, ordered to get along with the family, do not fight, yes, is it possible for people with religious knowledge to deny religious orders, no way.<sup>16</sup>

Second, patrilineal culture plays a crucial role in shaping the structure of marriage and family life in Madura. Within the family, men are regarded as leaders who hold decision-making authority. This leadership role is closely tied to their responsibility to provide for the family and uphold its honor, making men the embodiment of family dignity.<sup>17</sup> In Madurese society, men are expected to fulfill economic obligations, while women are traditionally assigned domestic responsibilities. This division of roles is not merely a social expectation but an ingrained tradition that takes effect immediately after the marriage contract is established. Any deviation from these roles, such as role reversal or a wife engaging in formal employment, can lead to significant social consequences. In extreme cases, a working wife is perceived as a disruption to traditional norms, potentially leading to social pathology.

Third, the culture of authority plays a fundamental role in shaping Madurese religious obedience, particularly in the context of marriage. The religious attitudes of the community are deeply influenced by authoritative religious figures such as *kiai* or *ustadz*, whose influence extends beyond spiritual matters to various aspects of social life.<sup>18</sup> Geertz noted that *kiai* serve not only as mediators of Islamic law and doctrine but also as agents of social change and cultural brokers. This broad societal role allows *kiai* to exert significant influence over all aspects of community life, including marriage. As a result, the authority of the *kiai* has contributed to the sacralization of marriage law. A marriage that does not receive the *kiai's* blessing is considered unusual or incomplete. Conversely, marriages officiated by *kiai* are regarded as both sacred and legally valid, while official marriage documentation is often seen as a mere administrative formality. This perception helps explain the persistence of *sirri* (unregistered) marriages in Madura. Given that *kiai* hold

<sup>16</sup> Zubaidi, "Interview" (Sumenep, 1 September, 2023).

<sup>17</sup> Universitas Pembangunan Nasional Veteran Jawa Timur, Indonesia et al., "The Synergy of Islamic Da'wah and Madura Culture Programmes on Nada FM Sumenep Radio, Indonesia," *Jurnal Komunikasi: Malaysian Journal of Communication* 37, no. 2 (June 30, 2021): 111–29, <https://doi.org/10.17576/JKMJC-2021-3702-08>.

<sup>18</sup> Yanwar Pribadi, "Kiai in Madura: Their Roles in Local Politics in Indonesia," *American Journal of Islam and Society* 29, no. 3 (2012): 1–22, <https://doi.org/10.35632/ajis.v29i3.316>; Muhammad Latif Fauzi, "Actors and Norms in an Islamic Marriage: A Study of Madura Community in Rural Eastern East Java," *Journal of Indonesian Islam* 13, no. 2 (2019): 297–325, <https://doi.org/10.15642/JIIS.2019.13.2.297-325>.

religious authority, and marriage is considered a religious ritual, a marriage ceremony is deemed truly complete only when solemnized by a *kiai*.

### **Economic Aspect in Tengka Tradition**

The social ethics of *tengka* also manifest in the ethical framework of marriage in Madura. This tradition is particularly evident during wedding ceremonies, which are generally categorized into two types: *walimah* and non-*walimah*. A *walimah* wedding refers to a ceremony in which the hosts do not accept financial contributions, gifts, or donations for wedding expenses. In contrast, a non-*walimah* wedding allows guests to contribute money or goods; however, these contributions must be reciprocated when the donor later marries off their own child. The Madurese refer to the money or goods given during the wedding as *tetengan*, while the social obligation to return the equivalent value in the future is known as *tengka*. This practice reflects a communal ethic of reciprocity, reinforcing social bonds and economic interdependence within Madurese society.

The *tengka* tradition is a customary practice in which community members entrust assets to others during a wedding reception. These assets, typically given in the form of goods or money, are provided through a *qard al-hasan bi al-kitabah* (written loan) contract and are later returned when the donor's family hosts their own wedding celebration. Functionally, the *tengka* tradition operates similarly to a capital market, where the community collectively provides capital assets, and the family hosting the wedding benefits from these resources. This system of mutual financial support helps families manage the economic burden of wedding expenses. As illustrated by Subaidi, who married off his daughter at the age of 15 in September 2023, the *tengka* tradition remains a vital mechanism of social and economic cooperation in Madurese society.

Yes, there is no *walimah* like that, we accept *tengka* from anyone, people from the same village, outside the village or any area. Generally in the form of money with different nominal. There are also goods such as rice, cigarettes, sugar. We can cash those in too. Our son got a surplus of 230 million yesterday. We used it to open a mini market in Tangerang and now we have opened another branch. *alhamdulillah*.<sup>19</sup>

At first, before the wedding, we spread the invitations first. It doesn't have to be to one village, it's everywhere, usually invitations are taken directly by relatives or close people, 10 to 20 invitations per person, then distributed according to them. In nearby villages too. Then there are those who come before the wedding day, but mostly on the wedding day. Our relatives usually donate decorations, cows, snacks and so on. If it's from outside the village, it's usually 50,000, 100,000, 1,000,000 and various kinds of money. There are also people from the community'. We record it, then later when they marry their children, we return it looking at the value, not the amount.<sup>20</sup>

From the recognition of the two informants, the implementation of the *tengka* tradition in marriage has become an unwritten custom, but agreed upon

<sup>19</sup> Zubaidi, "Interview."

<sup>20</sup> Abdurrahman Siraj, "Interview" (Pemekasan, 19 September, 2023).

together. The implementation of the *tengka* tradition in Madurese weddings, starting from the notification of marriage to the nearest villages, families outside the village, even outside the area with the concept of *non-walimah*. Then, attend the wedding event by bringing *tetengkan* (money and goods) written by the wedding minutes, starting from the nominal amount of money or goods and the address of the giver. The *tetengkan* must be returned with the same value at the time of return, even if it takes up to 10 years. The *tengka* tradition helps parents who want to marry off their children, but have insufficient funds. As stated by the following informant:

If you have children, especially teenage girls, virgins, every time there is a wedding and you receive a walimah event, you should give a lot of *tengka* money or goods. It is written down, later when the daughter wants to get married, she is invited to return the *tengka*. Here, it is common to have individual and community *tengka*. The point is that being able to relieve people is a good deed.<sup>21</sup>

It's called *tengka*, it's like a debt but you don't say it, you don't have to be happy with it, you're happy with it. It is still written down, archived. We will be notified when we have a wedding here. If someone forgets or does not return the *tengka*, it is usually reminded by a neighbour or family member, or we go directly to them. Sometimes there is more, so it is like an investment but not growing, but still by the value of the asset in its condition.<sup>22</sup>

The confessions of the informants above illustrate that daughters are economic assets that can bring higher social status. Marrying off daughters early, not because of culture, but because they want to change their fate through accepting *tetengkan* as a *tengka* tradition. This *tengka* tradition lives on and is used as a force of social law by the community, especially the traditional community. Early marriage becomes symbolic of economic transactions. The symbolism is formed from two stimulants; firstly, there is a stimulation to quickly have business capital through marriage, even though girls have not reached the marriage age limit. The legal benchmark for marriage age is based on the opinion of *kiai* or religious authorities, where the measure of marriage for women is being *baligh*.

No one knows my age, I am worried that my age is not *nutut*, so if I have reached puberty, just get married, so that the *tengka* returns quickly and can be used to open a business or other, buy a car or anything special. Her grandmother and grandmother will also be able to see their granddaughter in the aisle. It is not good for girls to wait until they are 19 years old to get married. If you don't return it soon, you'll forget about it.<sup>23</sup>

This exposure illustrates that early marriage initiation is not caused by culture or religion, but economic factors. Early marriage becomes a means to reap wealth for a better family life. Marriage is also an investment for the future, so accelerating marriage is a form of changing the socio-economic system or strata. Therefore, mental factors, psychology and maturity as the purpose of the law, are

<sup>21</sup> Hartono, "Interview" (Pamekasan, 13 September, 2023).

<sup>22</sup> Horri Idrus, "Interview" (Sumenep, 15 September, 2023).

<sup>23</sup> Jaffar Shadik, "Interview" (Sumenep, 10 September, 2023).



not the main considerations in marriage. The main considerations are local kiai fiqh law and economic assets.

The validity is like that, if you have reached puberty, it is religiously valid. The matter of the marriage book, later apply to the court. In this village, the next village, girls are married off when they reach puberty, and there is a big celebration, even for two days. On average 200 to 800 million, people nyabe' (niitp) *tengka*. Alhamdulillah, my daughter got married at the age of 15, when she reached puberty. The *tengka* is enough to buy land. The important thing is that it is religiously legal, and the needs of the family are far more important than the rules of the state.<sup>24</sup>

Our village is known as a wealthy village, many of the people here buy and open grocery stalls in Jakarta and Bali. The capital comes from the *tengka*, and when a girl or boy reaches puberty, they get married, and the money from the *tengka* is used as capital. Even now there are new ones, who have not yet reached puberty can ask for *tengka*, the fiancée is raised. Wait until they reach puberty, then get married. This strategy has been going on for a long time, you can see the houses here, they are all rich.<sup>25</sup>

When confirmed to religious leaders, said:

The legal requirement for marriage is puberty as prescribed by Allah in the Qur'an. Especially in this day and age, people can date long distance, use mobile phones, the internet, the mudharat is greater if not married immediately. Worried about doing what is prohibited by sharia. The benefit of lineage, the benefit of wealth and religion are prioritised. Of course the state regulations take this into account, but we know better in the community.<sup>26</sup>

From the informant's explanation above, the religious pattern of the Madura community in particular, in Madura marriage is based on asset preservation and efforts to provide sufficient income for family resilience. The legal aspects used are based on the concept of baligh (not on mental and maturity). Family resilience through *tengka* in marriage, regardless of the age limit of marriage, is part of the religious goal (*maqasid syariah*) in the *hifdz al-maal* section. The economy in the form of qard al-hasan and sharia capital is an entity reflected in the creation of early marriage. Economic functions become elements that form a materialistic character in early marriage.

### **Early Marriage as a Means of Investment and Business in the Family**

The phenomenon of early marriage in Madura society is driven by economic factors as the basis of social building. In this position, early marriage becomes part of the social structure influenced by economic factors. In this context, there are three forms of economic factors (the *qard al-hasan*). Where the culture takes place, wedding receptions become an activity to bring in money or goods from the community as clients. The phenomenon of early marriage in society is a social construct, not just individual awareness. The role of *tengka* in this position acts as

<sup>24</sup> Fajriyanto, "Interview" (Pamekasan, 19 September, 2023).

<sup>25</sup> Alviana Putri, "Interview" (Pamekasan, 13 September, 2023).

<sup>26</sup> Siraj, "Interview."

an element of social constructs, while early marriage is a symbol or product of these social constructs.

The *tengka* phenomenon, as revealed through interview findings, illustrates how weddings serve as a form of economic investment within the community. Families entrust money or goods during wedding ceremonies, with the expectation that these assets will be reciprocated when they host their own children's weddings. Although the value of these assets does not appreciate over time, they function as a form of guaranteed future investment, free from conventional risk considerations.

For instance, Fajriyanto and Alviana Putri reported that they consistently contributed financial investments at weddings, participating in 62 ceremonies since 2002. When they eventually married off their 14-year-old daughter, the income generated from the wedding was substantial enough to fund the construction of a house and the establishment of a business. This economic structure positions early marriage as an investment asset within the community. Beyond cultural and religious motivations, early marriage is increasingly influenced by investment logic. The practice operates similarly to a stock market, where families act as investors, expecting returns when it is their turn to host a wedding. This reciprocal system creates a materialistic symbiosis between debtors and creditors, where families strategically "invest" in early marriages to expedite financial returns.<sup>27</sup> The investment principle in this system fosters an urgency to capitalize on assets as quickly as possible. As a result, families may prioritize the economic benefits of marriage over considerations of mental maturity, emotional readiness, or long-term well-being. The primary criterion for marriage eligibility becomes *baligh*—physical maturity—rather than psychological or intellectual preparedness. This phenomenon reflects Karl Marx's assertion that modern societies are increasingly driven by economic imperatives rather than legal or cultural considerations.<sup>28</sup>

This description was conveyed by informants, such as Zarkasi and Idrus, both of whom have seven-year-old daughters. They have started investing money and goods every time there is a wedding event. In addition to their daughter's wedding, the money and goods are intended to build a business shop later. In contrast to Siraj and Shadik, before they had children, they had already given rice, money, at family weddings. It is intended that the value of the gift will increase when needed, namely when marrying off their children. This pattern makes child marriage at an early age a moment of business development.

In terms of family income, the Madura community, the majority in rural areas, is in a middle to lower economic condition. The family's economic livelihood sector depends on agriculture and marine businesses. However, from the results of

<sup>27</sup> Robert Guang Tian, "Development of Marxist Economic Anthropology in the New Era: From Historical Materialism Perspectives," *International Journal of Business Anthropology* 12, no. 1 (2022): 98, <https://doi.org/10.33423/ijba.v12i1.5256>.

<sup>28</sup> Mohammad Manzoor Malik, "Western Intellectual Insights for Muslim Policy Makers on Religion Based Economy," *International Journal of Social Science and Humanity* 5, no. 10 (2015): 879–86, <https://doi.org/10.7763/ijssh.2015.v5.573>.

the research, the families of early marriage perpetrators are still at productive ages, indicating that the desire to change economic conditions is a priority. While on the other hand, the Madura community believes that marrying off children can change fate, in addition to reducing the burden of life, it also hopes for the spouses of children who are married off early.

Early marriage is both a means and an asset to change the family's economic condition. As a means and an asset, marrying off children at an early age can have two impacts. It expands family relations. Generally, these relationships open up new and more promising economic development opportunities, especially to turn poor into stable. Girls also have assets to change the family economy. Because in the understanding of the Madura community, girls can create new conditions through marriage. The condition in question is the contribution of the daughter's husband to raise the family's status. In this situation, why marrying off girls at an early age is a hope to change the family economy.

Such economic factors cause the phenomenon of early marriage in Madura society to persist even though the law has undergone reform. As revealed by Marx, that economic determination into law is holistic, not passive and can develop according to changing times.<sup>29</sup> This is in line with the phenomenon of early marriage in Madura, which is dichotomised by economic termination, developing into a more stigmatic direction, namely engagement receptions (not just marriage). The role of economic constructs really enters into the social system, thus creating a new cluster called legal norms.<sup>30</sup> Kelsen considers that social constructs that are contaminated to the realm of norms such as religiosity and social law, cannot be changed unless there are social sanctions.<sup>31</sup> If we reflect on Hans Kelsen's legal theory, Indonesia's legal framework functions primarily as a regulative mechanism rather than a repressive one regarding early marriage. The legal system does not impose substantial punitive sanctions for early marriage beyond administrative penalties. As a result, the practice remains deeply entrenched, primarily driven by economic factors. The absence of strict legal deterrents allows economic considerations to take precedence in marriage decisions, reinforcing early marriage as a strategic financial investment. Since legal consequences are minimal, families continue to engage in this practice without significant fear of state intervention. This aligns with the broader notion that legal norms, particularly in pluralistic societies, often coexist with socio-economic imperatives, making economic determinism a crucial force in sustaining early marriage traditions.

<sup>29</sup> Nahom Eyasu, "A Review of Max Weber's Thesis on the Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism," *Global Journal of Human-Social Science: Sociology & Culture* 16, no. 6 (2016): 78, <https://doi.org/https://d1wqtxts1xzle7.cloudfront.net/>.

<sup>30</sup> Ahmed Fernanda Desky, "The Controversy of Muhammad Baqir Ash-Sadr's Thoughts (Eastern Capitalist) with the Thoughts of Karl Marx and Max Weber (Western Capitalists) in the Context of Global Islamic Economic System," *International Journal Ihya' 'Ulum Al-Din* 24, no. 1 (2022): 15–30, <https://doi.org/10.21580/ihya.24.1.7914>.

<sup>31</sup> M Usman, Mudhofir Abdullah, and Muh Nashirudin, "The Dynamics of Fatwa among a Diverse Community," *International Journal of Pharmaceutical Research* 12, no. 04 (2020), <https://doi.org/10.31838/ijpr/2020.12.04.596>.

Economic determination of the social system in society has an element of survival, namely social effect. Arkoun defines the meaning of social effect as a beneficial impact, in the sense that the social system (early marriage) can survive because it has a positive impact on individuals or families.<sup>32</sup> Like Betham's utilitarianism, which considers that legal resilience can survive if it has a value of usefulness. Conversely, legal power will be abandoned or ignored if it does not contain benefits.<sup>33</sup> Based on this, early marriage has a socio-economic impact on society, so that it survives even in the midst of legal reform and social change.

## Conclusion

It can be said that the economic determinants of the intensity of early marriage in traditional societies can endure and thrive due to the existence of benefits; material and immaterial. Weber defines material as the real impact on material improvement, while immaterial relates to social satisfaction.<sup>34</sup> Weber's interpretation is in line with the phenomenon of early marriage, where individuals can fulfil their economic desires through marriage, and then give birth to social satisfaction after being aligned with the middle social class. The resilience of early marriage is not due to culture and religion, but rather the economic resilience of the family called *tengka*. Economic termination takes the form of collecting assets (*tengka*) through the symbolism of marriage and investing in assets (*tengka*) for the family's future. Both forms of termination are believed and customarily justified by the community as *masalah* and beneficial for the family and society. *Tengka* becomes an element that shapes and changes the legal construct in society, dichotomising all other elements such as religion and culture.

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<sup>33</sup> Eranew B Marak, "Immanuel Kant and Jeremy Bentham's Ideology on Capital Punishment," *Journal of Psychology and Political Science*, no. 31 (2023): 33–40, <https://doi.org/10.55529/jpps.31.33.40>.

<sup>34</sup> Shaleh Isre, "Peta Pemikiran Karl Marx (Materialisme Dialektis Dan Materialisme Historis)," 2nd ed. (Yogyakarta: LKiS, 2000), 139.

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