



Faith, Custom, and Village Authority: The Historical Transformation of Muro Nggeteq in East Lombok, 1960-1990

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Abstract: Muro Nggeteq was a premarital adat gama ritual in Pengadangan Village, East Lombok, that combined Islamic repentance, customary examination, and village administration. This article reconstructs its historical transformation between 1960 and 1990 and explains why the ritual remained strong before 1975 but declined thereafter. The study used the historical method through heuristics, source criticism, interpretation, and historiography. Sources included interviews with customary leaders, religious figures, village officials, community elders, and a young cultural activist; written repentance formulas and village records; material objects; and field documentation. The findings show that the ritual's agrarian terms formed a moral metaphor: muro meant guarding a relationship, while nggeteq meant admitting prohibited premarital conduct. Its stages - betaubat, taklik, and a mosque examination - represented a triadic normative order of Islamic, customary, and governmental law. Under Seneng, Iradim, and Mamiq Rul (1960-1975), these authorities were institutionally aligned, making the ritual socially obligatory. Under Sukarma (1975-1990), procedure was simplified, governmental enforcement weakened, and expanding fiqh interpretation separated religious requirements from inherited ceremonial forms. By 1991, the integrated ritual had disappeared. The article concludes that cultural continuity depended on institutional cooperation and shared interpretation. Contemporary revitalization should retain premarital education, responsibility, and inter-institutional cooperation while excluding corporal punishment, coercion, and public shaming.

Keywords: adat gama; historical method; legal pluralism; Muro Nggeteq; Sasak marriage

Abstrak: Muro Nggeteq merupakan ritual pranikah adat gama di Desa Pengadangan, Lombok Timur, yang memadukan pertobatan secara Islam, pemeriksaan adat, dan administrasi pemerintahan desa. Artikel ini merekonstruksi transformasi historisnya pada 1960-1990 serta menjelaskan alasan ritual tersebut bertahan kuat sebelum 1975, tetapi kemudian mengalami kemunduran. Penelitian menggunakan metode sejarah melalui heuristik, kritik sumber, interpretasi, dan historiografi. Sumber penelitian meliputi wawancara dengan tokoh adat, tokoh agama, pejabat desa, sesepuh masyarakat, dan pemuda penggerak budaya; bacaan pertobatan dan profil desa; benda ritual; serta dokumentasi lapangan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa istilah agraris dalam ritual membentuk metafora moral: muro berarti menjaga hubungan, sedangkan nggeteq berarti mengakui pelanggaran dalam pergaulan sebelum menikah. Tahapan betaubat, taklik, dan pemeriksaan di masjid merepresentasikan tatanan normatif yang memadukan hukum Islam, adat, dan pemerintahan. Pada masa Seneng, Iradim, dan Mamiq Rul (1960-1975), ketiga otoritas tersebut berjalan selaras sehingga ritual bersifat wajib secara sosial. Pada masa Sukarma (1975-1990), prosesi disederhanakan, dukungan pemerintah melemah, dan berkembangnya pemahaman fikih memisahkan kewajiban agama dari bentuk upacara warisan. Pada 1991, ritual terpadu tersebut tidak lagi dilaksanakan. Pelestarian masa kini perlu mempertahankan pendidikan pranikah, tanggung jawab, dan kerja sama kelembagaan, tetapi meniadakan hukuman fisik, paksaan, serta memperlakukan peserta.

Kata Kunci: adat gama; metode sejarah; Muro Nggeteq; perkawinan Sasak; pluralisme hukum



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Introduction

Marriage rituals in Indonesia are not merely ceremonial additions to a legal contract. They are social texts through which communities define adulthood, family responsibility, religious propriety, and membership in a moral order. In Lombok, Sasak marriage is commonly discussed through *merariq*, a sequence involving elopement, family notification, religious solemnization, and public recognition. Recent studies show that these practices operate within overlapping customary, Islamic, and state norms rather than within a single legal system (Hamdani & Fauzia, 2022; Hariati et al., 2024; Jayadi et al., 2023). This plural setting makes marriage a productive site for historical inquiry because changes in ritual procedure often reveal changes in authority, religious interpretation, and village governance.

One lesser-known component of this marriage landscape is Muro Nggeteq, an adat gama ritual formerly performed in Pengadangan Village, Pringgasela District, East Lombok. Adat gama is a local expression for custom whose form and social organization are rooted in village tradition while its ethical content is interpreted through Islam. In Muro Nggeteq, the prospective groom passed through repentance, an examination of marital readiness, and a public moral test before the marriage contract. The ritual was therefore more than an aesthetic performance. It connected personal conduct to the institutional presence of the village head, the village religious leader, *kyai*, neighborhood officials, customary leaders, and the groom's family (Himawati, 2024).

The names of the ritual originate in rice cultivation. Muro refers to guarding ripening rice from birds, whereas *nggeteq* means tasting or biting a grain during the guarding process. The agrarian vocabulary was transferred into a moral metaphor. Muro signified the ability of a couple to guard their relationship before marriage and avoid acts prohibited by religion and custom. Nggeteq signified an admission that prohibited intimacy had occurred. The metaphor converted an everyday agricultural experience into a concise local pedagogy about restraint, honesty, and accountability. It also illustrates how intangible heritage remains intelligible when symbols are anchored in the livelihood and language of the community that created them.

The historical importance of Muro Nggeteq lies in its changing relationship with authority. According to oral traditions documented in the underlying research, the ritual was formulated by Guru Bulet, a nineteenth-century religious leader, during Balinese rule in Lombok. Its outward elements were remembered as sufficiently close to Balinese ceremonial forms to reduce interference, while its prayers, repentance, and marital instruction carried Islamic meanings. Whether every detail of this origin narrative can be corroborated by written records is uncertain; nevertheless, the narrative is historically significant because it is how the people of Pengadangan explain the ritual's legitimacy and its synthesis of faith and custom (Himawati, 2024). Oral memory here is not treated as a transparent record, but as evidence of collective historical consciousness.

From 1960 to 1975, the ritual was maintained under village heads Seneng, Iradim, and Mamiq Rul. The research describes this period as one of procedural continuity and strong institutional enforcement. Families considered the ritual obligatory, village and religious officials were involved, and non-participation could attract social reprimand. From 1975 to 1990, under Sukarma, the procedure was gradually simplified. The repentance stage moved

from the village religious leader's house to the groom's home or was merged with the marriage ceremony; fewer officials attended; and community interpretations changed as fiqh education expanded. By 1991, the ritual had ceased to be a regular practice (Himawati, 2024). This periodization suggests that cultural continuity depended not only on inherited belief but also on the administrative and symbolic support of village institutions.

This historical pattern is relevant to studies of legal pluralism. Legal pluralism describes the coexistence of more than one normative order in a social field, including state law, religious law, and customary rules (Griffiths, 1986). Indonesian scholarship has emphasized that these orders do not simply stand side by side; they negotiate, compete, and sometimes transform one another (Anggraeni, 2023; Flambonita et al., 2021). Research on Sasak women likewise demonstrates that marriage decisions are shaped by the interaction of fiqh, adat, and state marriage law (Jumarim et al., 2024). Muro Nggeteq offers a micro-historical case in which this interaction was embodied in a sequence of ritual actors and spatial movements.

The case is also important for discussions of cultural preservation. Contemporary heritage policy increasingly understands living heritage as a set of practices that communities continually reinterpret rather than as a frozen reproduction of the past. Community participation, intergenerational transmission, and adaptive governance are central to this approach (UNESCO, 2003; Suprpti, 2021). Rural cultural resilience similarly depends on whether communities can retain identity-bearing knowledge while adjusting institutions and meanings to social change (Gocer et al., 2024). The disappearance of Muro Nggeteq after 1990, followed by recent local interest in its educational values, raises a critical question: which elements constitute the heritage's ethical core, and which historical elements should not be revived in their original form?

The question is particularly sensitive because the earlier ritual included a reported corporal sanction: a groom who answered nggeteq could be struck forty-four times with flattened rattan. This article treats that sanction strictly as a historical finding, not as a practice to be endorsed. Any contemporary revitalization must separate moral reflection, premarital education, and institutional cooperation from physical punishment, humiliation, or coercion. The state marriage framework has also changed. Law No. 16 of 2019 sets the minimum marriage age at nineteen for both women and men, replacing the earlier unequal threshold (Republic of Indonesia, 2019). Thus, the present relevance of the ritual lies in culturally grounded education, not in reproducing every former mechanism of discipline.

Existing studies on Sasak marriage have focused mainly on merariq, its legal status, its social impacts, and its relationship with Islamic and state law (Haq & Hamdi, 2016; Ilmalia et al., 2021; Muhsinin et al., 2022). Comparative research on Indonesian marriage customs has also examined purification, virginity, family honor, and the accommodation of religious values in local ceremonies (Amrin et al., 2020; Santoso et al., 2022; Suwarjin et al., 2023; Yono et al., 2023). These studies establish that ritual can operate as moral education and social regulation. However, they do not explain the specific historical trajectory of Muro Nggeteq or why its continuity changed across village administrations.

This article therefore asks three questions. First, how did the people of Pengadangan remember the historical formation and symbolic logic of Muro Nggeteq? Second, how was the ritual organized through religious, customary, and governmental authority from 1960 to 1990? Third, what explains its continuity, simplification, and eventual disappearance? The article argues that Muro Nggeteq functioned as an adaptive religious pedagogy and a village governance mechanism. Its strength during 1960-1975 resulted from the alignment of religious, customary, and administrative authority, while its decline during 1975-1990 reflected

institutional relaxation and a shift in religious interpretation. This periodized explanation is the article's principal contribution.

Research Methods

This article is developed from a qualitative historical study conducted in Pengadangan Village, Pringgasela District, East Lombok. The historical method followed four interconnected stages: heuristics, source criticism, interpretation, and historiography (Himawati, 2024; Sulasman, 2014). The unit of analysis was not the entire Sasak marriage system but the formation, implementation, and social meanings of Muro Nggeteq, with particular attention to the period 1960-1990. The terminal year was selected because the ritual's institutional support and regular performance had substantially weakened by the end of Sukarma's administration, and informants remembered it as no longer observable after 1991.

Heuristics involved collecting oral, written, and material sources. Oral sources included interviews with customary leaders, village religious figures, kyai, village officials, community elders, and a young cultural activist. Some informants had directly observed the ritual, while others received information through institutional or family transmission. Written evidence included the repentance formula used in the *betaubat* stage, village profile data, and relevant literature on Pengadangan, Sasak marriage, custom, and Islamic law. Material sources included the ewer used for ablution, the betel set, and the flattened rattan remembered as an instrument of sanction. Photographs from the field documentation were also used to identify the procession's spatial and material arrangement.

Source criticism was applied externally and internally. External criticism assessed whether informants were positioned to know the period or ritual stage they described and whether written or material sources corresponded to the claimed context. Internal criticism compared accounts across informants, distinguished direct observation from inherited stories, and identified points that remained dependent on collective memory. The nineteenth-century origin under Guru Bulet is therefore presented as an orally transmitted historical narrative rather than as a fully documented archival fact. By contrast, the names and terms of village heads from 1960 to 1990 were cross-checked against the village profile used in the study.

Interpretation combined chronological reconstruction with a legal-pluralist reading. The analysis examined how actors represented three normative domains: the village religious leader and kyai represented Islamic requirements; the customary leader represented adat obligations; and the village head represented state administration and governmental authority. It also examined changes in procedure, location, participation, sanctions, and public meaning across two periods, 1960-1975 and 1975-1990. The final historiography was organized around causation and change rather than merely listing ritual stages. Claims about social impact, especially child-marriage prevention, are reported as community perceptions because the original study did not collect longitudinal or statistical outcome data.

To strengthen the discussion, the findings were compared with recent literature on Sasak marriage, Indonesian legal pluralism, living heritage, and child marriage. This additional literature does not replace the primary findings; it is used to situate them and to clarify contemporary implications. Quantitative research shows that child marriage in Indonesia is associated with education and broader socioeconomic conditions, which means no single ritual can be assumed to cause a decline in early marriage (Cameron et al., 2023; Fitria et al., 2024; Rumble et al., 2018). Accordingly, this article interprets Muro Nggeteq as a potential culturally resonant educational resource, not as a proven standalone intervention.

Research Results

Agrarian Metaphor and the Historical Genesis of Adat Gama

The first finding concerns the relationship between agricultural language and moral classification. Muro and nggeteq were not abstract theological terms. They were taken from the practical world of rice farming, in which a farmer guards a ripening field but may also taste a grain while doing so. This familiar contrast enabled the community to speak about premarital conduct without relying on technical juridical language. To be muro was to guard a relationship; to be nggeteq was to have crossed a boundary. The metaphor made the moral lesson memorable because it joined livelihood, speech, and social expectation in a single pair of terms.

Such metaphors are historically durable because they compress a normative system into an image that can be transmitted orally. The ritual did not define premarital responsibility solely as private piety. Guarding was understood as a relational obligation involving the couple, their families, religious authorities, and village officials. The prospective groom's answer in the mosque was therefore addressed to a community of witnesses. In this sense, Muro Nggeteq transformed an intimate matter into a public declaration of readiness and accountability. The practice resembles other Indonesian marriage rituals in which bodily acts, colors, plants, or household objects communicate ethical expectations (Amrin et al., 2020; Suwarjin et al., 2023; Yono et al., 2023).

The oral tradition attributes the ritual's creation to Guru Bulet, a charismatic Islamic figure in nineteenth-century Pengadangan. Informants explained that Balinese political power restricted or interfered with Islamic activities, encouraging Guru Bulet to package Islamic instruction in forms that outwardly resembled local or Balinese ceremonial culture. Clothing, headgear, and decorative elements could be read as cultural camouflage, while repentance, shahada, prayer, and marriage instruction formed the ritual's internal content. The remembered strategy was neither cultural surrender nor simple resistance. It was an adaptive translation that allowed Islamic pedagogy to be practiced through a recognizable ceremonial idiom.

This origin narrative helps explain the term adat gama. Custom and religion were not treated as mutually exclusive categories. Rather, custom provided the social form through which religious teaching became collective practice. Similar negotiations appear in studies of Gayo and Manggarai marriage, where local procedures remain powerful even as communities seek religious and state recognition (Lon & Widyawati, 2021; Santoso et al., 2022). The historical specificity of Pengadangan lies in the remembered political function of disguise and in the role of a religious leader who converted a marriage ritual into a medium of da'wah and premarital instruction.

The narrative must nevertheless be read critically. The surviving evidence is predominantly oral, and the study did not locate a nineteenth-century manuscript that records the first performance. Historical analysis should therefore distinguish between the factual minimum and the cultural meaning of memory. The factual minimum is that later generations consistently associated Muro Nggeteq with Guru Bulet and Islamic teaching. The cultural meaning is that the community legitimized the ritual by connecting it to a respected religious ancestor who protected Islam under foreign rule. The memory itself became a source of authority, even when its precise chronology could not be independently verified.

Table 1. Periodization of Village Leadership and the Condition of Muro Nggeteq, 1960-1990

Village head	Term	Ritual condition	Institutional pattern
Seneng	1960-1962	Strong continuity	Village, religious, and customary authorities jointly enforced the inherited sequence.
Iradim	1962-1966	Strong continuity	The division of ritual roles and social obligation remained stable.
Mamiq Rul	1967-1975	Strong continuity	Public procession and full ritual stages were maintained across two terms.
Sukarma	1975-1983; 1983-1990	Simplification and decline	Repentance was relocated or merged with the wedding; official pressure and participation declined.

Source: Research Data, 2024

Ritual Sequence and the Triadic Normative Order

The second finding is that the ritual sequence materialized a triadic normative order. Its three major stages were *betaubat*, *taklik*, and the core Muro Nggeteq examination. Each stage was located in a different social space and led by a different authority. This arrangement made the ritual a moving map of village governance: the groom traveled from the religious leader's house, through customary and governmental examination, to the mosque. The movement connected household, village, and sacred space while gradually increasing the solemnity of the process.

Betaubat was performed at the house of the *penghulu desa*, the village religious leader. The prospective groom was accompanied by family members, the head of the local area, *kyai*, and neighborhood officials. Participants were expected to perform ablution before departure. The family prepared a betel set, incense, an *ancak* tray, and an ewer. At the destination, the religious leader explained the meaning of repentance, reviewed religious eligibility for marriage, asked about the groom's physical and spiritual readiness, and guided a repentance formula followed by *dhikr* and prayer (Himawati, 2024). The stage placed moral self-examination before legal solemnization.

The repentance formula acknowledged visible and hidden, small and great wrongdoing, and declared repentance before God and the assembled witnesses. Its social function was not equivalent to a judicial confession. It was a pedagogical act through which the groom was reminded that marriage required a change of conduct and an ability to provide material and emotional support. The village religious leader also checked basic religious impediments, including prohibited kinship. The combination of repentance and eligibility demonstrates how *fiqh* knowledge was translated into a communal rite rather than delivered only as private counseling.

Taklik followed at the house of a customary religious figure. The village head checked age, occupation, documentation, and the couple's readiness to comply with governmental requirements. The customary leader asked whether the groom was willing to complete the mosque stage with faith and honesty. Informants explicitly described the village head as a symbol of governmental law and the customary leader as a symbol of *adat* law, while the earlier *betaubat* stage represented religious law. The sequence therefore did not merely combine three

sets of norms; it assigned each normative domain a visible representative and a specific responsibility.

This arrangement supports a legal-pluralist interpretation. Legal pluralism is not simply the existence of multiple rules; it concerns how institutions allocate authority and how people navigate potentially overlapping obligations (Anggraeni, 2023; Griffiths, 1986). In Muro Nggeteq, state, adat, and Islamic norms were coordinated rather than treated as rivals. The groom was considered ready only when each authority had completed its part. Recent research among Sasak communities similarly finds that legal consciousness is shaped by the interplay of fiqh, adat, and state marriage law (Jumarim et al., 2024). The Pengadangan case adds a historical dimension by showing how that interplay was staged through ritual procedure.

The final stage took place at the mosque. The groom walked with his head lowered, was expected not to respond to teasing, and recited dhikr and istighfar. He carried or was preceded by an ewer for ablution and a betel set containing sirih leaves, areca nut, lime, and a customary payment. In the mosque, appointed kyai received him and asked the central question: 'Muro or Nggeteq?' Muro indicated that the relationship had been guarded; nggeteq admitted prohibited conduct. The betel mixture later produced a red mark placed on the groom's forehead as evidence that the rite had been completed.

The historical record also includes the reported sanction of forty-four strokes with flattened rattan for an nggeteq answer. In its original setting, informants interpreted the sanction as a deterrent and as enforcement of collectively recognized norms. From a contemporary perspective, however, the sanction cannot be separated from risks of violence, shame, coerced confession, and unequal treatment. The educational core of the rite - repentance, honest reflection, premarital readiness, and coordinated counseling - can be preserved without corporal punishment. Living heritage is sustained through meaningful transmission, not through an obligation to reproduce every historical practice unchanged (UNESCO, 2003).

Table 2. Stages, Actors, and Normative Functions of Muro Nggeteq

Stage and location	Main actors	Principal activities	Normative function
Betaubat - house of the village religious leader	Prospective groom, family, penghulu desa, kyai, local and neighborhood officials	Ablution, repentance formula, religious eligibility, marital advice, prayer	Islamic law and moral purification
Taklik - house of customary/religious figure	Village head and customary leader	Age, occupation, documentation, state readiness, commitment to honesty and faith	State administration and customary responsibility
Muro Nggeteq - mosque	Appointed kyai, guardian, accompanying officials	Procession, ablution, central question, completion mark, historically a sanction for nggeteq	Public accountability and communal moral pedagogy

Source: Research Data, 2024



Figure 1. The prospective groom and accompanying participants in the Muro Nggeteq procession

Source: Research Data, 2024

Continuity under Seneng, Iradim, and Mamiq Rul, 1960-1975

The third finding concerns the institutional conditions of continuity. From 1960 to 1975, village government and religious leadership acted in concert. Seneng served from 1960 to 1962, Iradim from 1962 to 1966, and Mamiq Rul across two terms from 1967 to 1975. Informants remembered all three as leaders who upheld adat gama and required couples to complete Muro Nggeteq. The ritual's procedure was described as substantially unchanged from the inherited model associated with Guru Bulet. This continuity was not passive. It was actively produced through instructions, social expectations, and the participation of village officials.

Under Seneng, families that did not perform the ritual could be reprimanded by neighbors, religious figures, or governmental authorities. Such enforcement reveals how customary norms gain force through social relationships even when they are not codified as state law. The sanction for non-participation was primarily social: criticism, warning, and reputational pressure. The ritual was therefore embedded in a dense network of village observation. Its obligatory character depended on the expectation that officials and neighbors would notice whether a family had complied.

The social context of marriage also strengthened the ritual's relevance. Informants recalled that after merariq, a bride might remain in the groom's family environment for a long period while the household waited for harvest and prepared the wedding. The waiting period could last several months. In community memory, this created anxiety about premarital intimacy and made the language of guarding especially salient. Muro Nggeteq functioned as a warning before marriage and as retrospective repentance immediately before the contract. It addressed a locally specific interval between elopement and legal-religious solemnization.

Iradim's administration maintained the same institutional pattern. The persistence of procedure across a change of village head indicates that the ritual had become more than the preference of a single leader. It was supported by a shared administrative tradition. The village head, the penghulu desa, heads of local areas, kyai, neighborhood officials, and customary leaders each knew their place in the sequence. Cultural continuity was therefore organizational. The community possessed not only a story about the ritual but also a division of labor capable of reproducing it.

Mamiq Rul's two terms continued this alignment. Informants emphasized the groom's procession from the house toward the mosque, the lowered gaze, silence, and remembrance of God. These embodied requirements disciplined attention and marked a transition from ordinary

village life to a morally charged space. The procession also made the ritual visible to the community. Visibility strengthened collective memory: even residents who were not formal participants could observe the route, objects, clothing, and gathering. The ritual became a recurring public lesson.

This period demonstrates that heritage transmission depends on authority, repetition, and participation. A custom can be widely valued yet decline when the institutions that organize it disappear. Conversely, consistent governmental recognition can stabilize the roles of religious and customary actors without converting adat into state law. The arrangement resembles collaborative governance, but its legitimacy came from local history and face-to-face relationships rather than from a formal program. The village head's role was particularly decisive because he could convene actors, connect documentation to ritual, and signal that participation was socially expected.



Figure 2. Participants and ritual objects at the mosque entrance

Source: Research Data, 2024

Simplification and Decline under Sukarma, 1975-1990

The fourth finding is that decline occurred through gradual simplification rather than an abrupt prohibition. Sukarma served from 1975 to 1983 and again from 1983 to 1990. Informants did not describe the early years of his administration as a complete break. Between approximately 1975 and 1980, the ritual still occurred, but preparation was reduced and participation became less comprehensive. Family meetings could be shortened, the customary leader might be absent, and the betaubat stage no longer had to occur at the village religious leader's house.

By moving repentance to the groom's home or merging it with the wedding event, the community retained an Islamic meaning while weakening the earlier spatial and institutional sequence. This is an important distinction. The ritual was not simply abandoned because people became less religious. On the contrary, informants connected simplification to the spread of

fiqh learning. Some religious leaders argued that sincere repentance could be performed without the full inherited ceremony and without corporal punishment. The expansion of textual religious knowledge changed how villagers evaluated the authority of custom.

The reinterpretation also involved historical identity. Some villagers increasingly viewed the ritual's clothing and objects as remnants of Balinese rule rather than as a strategic Islamic adaptation. Once the external form was detached from the Guru Bulet narrative, it could appear religiously unnecessary or culturally suspect. This shift illustrates that the same symbol can support opposite conclusions. For earlier generations, resemblance to Balinese forms demonstrated the ingenuity of Islamic survival; for later generations, it raised doubts about authenticity. Cultural continuity depends on which interpretation becomes persuasive.

Governmental enforcement weakened at the same time. Informants repeatedly stated that village authorities no longer pressed families to complete every stage. Without official coordination, the network of penghulu, kyai, customary leaders, local heads, and neighborhood officers became optional. The ritual then competed with the practical demands of preparing the marriage contract and celebration. Families increasingly treated the akad nikah as the central sacred event and Muro Nggeteq as a supplementary custom. As participation fell, fewer residents acquired the procedural knowledge needed to organize the rite.

Between approximately 1985 and 1990, this cumulative process produced visible decline. Some couples married without the ritual; others retained only repentance or counseling. When Sukarma's term ended, informants remembered no effective institutional mechanism that required or routinely organized Muro Nggeteq. By 1991 it could no longer be observed as a regular village practice. The disappearance was thus a consequence of three interacting changes: reduced governmental support, reinterpretation by religious authorities, and declining community familiarity.

The pattern complicates narratives that explain cultural loss only through modernization or youth disinterest. Those factors may matter, but the Pengadangan evidence points more directly to institutional and interpretive change. The ritual declined when its three normative pillars no longer converged. Religious teachings could be delivered through other means, state administration could proceed without adat, and customary actors lacked the authority to compel participation. Once the functions were separated, the integrated ceremony lost its practical necessity.

Comparable studies show that customary marriage practices remain viable when communities can negotiate recognition across legal systems (Hariati et al., 2024; Lon & Widyawati, 2021). The Muro Nggeteq case demonstrates the inverse: when negotiation is replaced by parallel, disconnected procedures, a ritual may become redundant. This does not necessarily indicate cultural failure. It may represent selective adaptation. The historical task is to identify what was lost - inter-institutional cooperation, public moral pedagogy, and shared memory - as well as what was intentionally discarded, including coercive sanctions.

Social Functions, Cultural Resilience, and Contemporary Relevance

The original study identified three perceived social impacts: discouraging early marriage and risky premarital conduct, strengthening cooperation among village authorities, and preserving local culture. These impacts should be interpreted with different evidentiary weights. The strongest evidence concerns institutional cooperation, because the ritual directly required the presence of governmental, religious, and customary actors. The cultural-preservation function is also inherent in repeated performance. The claim that the ritual reduced child marriage is more tentative, because informants offered interpretations rather than statistical comparisons.

Community members believed that the ritual encouraged young people to consider age, economic readiness, moral responsibility, and family life before marrying. That belief is plausible as a form of premarital education, but early marriage is produced by multiple conditions. Indonesian research links child marriage to educational attainment, poverty, gender norms, pregnancy, family strategies, and local legal culture (Cameron et al., 2023; Fitria et al., 2024; Rumble et al., 2018). Resistance to child-marriage prevention can also emerge when state rules, religious understanding, and community norms fail to negotiate effectively (Musawwamah et al., 2023). Muro Nggeteq should therefore be understood as one possible communication channel within a broader prevention strategy.

Any current use must comply with Law No. 16 of 2019, which establishes nineteen as the minimum marriage age for both women and men. The historical ritual's check of age and documentation could be redesigned as a rights-based readiness session conducted with the village government, religious counselors, health workers, and families. Such a session could address education, consent, legal registration, conflict resolution, reproductive health, and economic planning. The local term muro could frame the positive responsibility to guard dignity, education, and future wellbeing without requiring a public disclosure of intimate conduct.

The institutional-cohesion function offers a second avenue for revitalization. Informants described Pengadangan's dual leadership, in which the village head managed government affairs and the penghulu desa coordinated religious life through kyai and teachers. Muro Nggeteq gave these networks a shared responsibility. A contemporary program could recover this cooperative principle through voluntary premarital forums, cultural education, and documentation of oral history. The objective would not be to restore the authority of any one actor over the couple, but to create coordinated support that respects adult consent and state law.

The heritage function requires careful selection. Living heritage survives when communities identify values that remain meaningful and allow forms to evolve (UNESCO, 2003). For Muro Nggeteq, the values include honesty, repentance, responsibility, family deliberation, respect for religious teaching, lawful marriage registration, and cooperation among village institutions. Potentially harmful elements include corporal punishment, public shaming, coercive confession, and any implication that only the groom bears responsibility for premarital conduct. A gender-responsive reinterpretation should address both prospective spouses and avoid reproducing unequal moral burdens.

The material culture can still support education. The ewer can symbolize purification and readiness; the betel ingredients can be explained as a local semiotic system; the procession route can be mapped as part of village history; and elders' narratives can be recorded. Field photographs show that the ritual's visibility and spatial movement were central to its public character. These elements can be used in exhibitions, school history projects, village cultural archives, or non-coercive reenactments. Documentation would also reduce dependence on a shrinking number of elderly witnesses.

The broader contribution of the case is an understanding of cultural resilience as institutional translation. Muro Nggeteq was created, according to community memory, by translating Islamic teaching into a ceremonial form suitable to a politically constrained environment. It later declined when the form was no longer considered necessary or legitimate. Contemporary preservation should repeat the original creative principle rather than mechanically copying the old form. In other words, fidelity to the heritage may require adaptation: the ethical purpose must be translated into institutions that are lawful, nonviolent, gender-sensitive, and relevant to current youth.

This interpretation also refines legal-pluralist analysis. The relationship among adat, Islam, and the state is not fixed. During 1960-1975, their representatives were integrated in one sequence. During 1975-1990, fiqh interpretation and state administration became increasingly independent of adat. The ritual's disappearance resulted from this reconfiguration. Legal pluralism therefore has a temporal dimension: normative orders change not only in content but also in their degree of institutional connection. Historical research can reveal when and why those connections become strong or weak.

Finally, the case demonstrates why local history matters for public policy. A generic campaign against child marriage may be legally correct but culturally distant. A purely traditional revival may be locally resonant but conflict with contemporary rights. Historical knowledge provides a third path. It identifies the community's own vocabulary of responsibility, shows how earlier institutions cooperated, and exposes practices that should not be repeated. This enables a culturally grounded, critically selective approach to preservation and social education.

Conclusion

Muro Nggeteq was a premarital adat gama ritual that translated an agrarian metaphor into a system of moral education. In community memory, Guru Bulet formulated it in the nineteenth century as an adaptive strategy that protected Islamic instruction under Balinese rule. Its three-stage sequence - betaubat, taklik, and the mosque examination - organized the authority of religious, customary, and governmental actors. The ritual therefore functioned simultaneously as repentance, premarital counseling, legal-administrative examination, public pedagogy, and village governance.

The period 1960-1975 was characterized by institutional alignment. Seneng, Iradim, and Mamiq Rul supported the ritual, village and religious officials reproduced its division of labor, and social pressure made participation effectively obligatory. During 1975-1990, the sequence was simplified under Sukarma. Repentance was relocated or merged with the marriage ceremony, fewer actors participated, governmental enforcement weakened, and expanding fiqh knowledge encouraged villagers to distinguish Islamic requirements from inherited ceremonial form. By 1991, the integrated ritual had disappeared from regular practice.

The article's main argument is that the continuity of living heritage depends on the relationship among institutions, not only on community appreciation. Muro Nggeteq remained strong when adat, religious authority, and village government converged; it declined when those domains separated and its symbols were reinterpreted. Its perceived contribution to preventing early marriage should not be treated as statistically proven. Nevertheless, its language of guarding, responsibility, and readiness can enrich broader prevention and premarital education when combined with education, health, economic, and legal measures.

A contemporary revitalization should preserve values rather than reproduce every historical mechanism. Repentance, honest reflection, lawful registration, family responsibility, and cooperation among village actors remain constructive. Corporal punishment, public shaming, and coerced confession should be excluded. Reinterpreted in a voluntary, gender-responsive, and rights-based format, Muro Nggeteq can become a resource for local history education and cultural resilience while remaining consistent with Indonesia's current marriage law and the ethical demands of the present.

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