

Yelim Philanthropy: Exploring Social Cohesion and Alignment with Sharia Economic Law in Kei Society

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ABSTRACT

The practice of Yelim as a form of interfaith philanthropy has yet to be scrutinised in the intersecting fields of legal sociology and Islamic economic law. The purpose of this study is to reveal the practice of Yelim in encouraging legal consciousness and social cohesion in the Kei Community and to show the harmony of its practice under the principles of Sharia economic law. This study is qualitative research under the phenomenological approach to deeply interpret the practice of Yelim with a focus on philanthropy, and fund management. Data were obtained through interviews, observation and documentation. The results disclose that Yelim is undertaken accountably by traditional figures and community members. The funds have been used for social purposes, including weddings, funerals, religious buildings, and education support. The philanthropy of both Muslims and Christians in the collection and utilisation exemplifies social solidarity and the principle of distributive justice. According to Islamic economic law, the philanthropy management has been in line with *maqāṣid al-sharī'a* in the principles of *Hifzh al-Nafs* and *Hifzh al-Māl*, linking to *maslahah*, trust, humanity and justice. The tradition undertaken has shown the legal awareness rooted in social norms and ancestral values, not merely formal legal texts. Yelim serves as a model for integrating customary law and Sharia economic principles in multicultural communities.

Keywords: Yelim, Philanthropy, Legal Consciousness, Interfaith Solidarity, Sharia Economic Law

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INTRODUCTION

Indigenous philanthropy is more than a charitable practice. It can provide an expression of solidarity, spirituality and social responsibility rooted in collective consciousness (Hamid et al., 2024; Nopriyasman et al., 2025). One tangible manifestation of Indigenous philanthropy is the Yelim practice carried out by the Moluccan people of the Kei Islands. Yelim has emerged as a symbol of mutual cooperation and a social safety net, binding community members across clan divisions, religious affiliations, and social status. In practice, Yelim funds are allocated for traditional needs, including weddings, funerals, circumcisions, home construction, education support, and even the construction of places of worship, both churches and mosques (Kabakoran, 2017).

The construction of places of worship with the support of Yelim contributes to socio-legal dynamics. Based on preliminary data¹, the tradition not only reflects the strength of interfaith solidarity within Kei culture but also fosters a shared philanthropic space amidst diverse beliefs. Muslim and Christian communities both contribute to and benefit from Yelim without discrimination, making it a symbol of social cohesion that can thrive in the modern era. Nevertheless, this practice has also given rise to divergent perspectives, particularly among some contemporary Muslim groups adhering to specific religious interpretations. In Islam, as indicated in *Fatāwā al-Lajnah ad-Dā'imah* (2009/1430 AH), it is impermissible for a Muslim to participate in the construction of places of worship for other religions (al-Jeresy, 2009; Almayez, 2022; Arifinsyah & Sofian, 2021; Mazumdar & Mazumdar, 2001; Sunier et al., 2005). However, the Kei community primarily bases such decisions on the principles of social benefit, customary norms, and the spirit of preserving interreligious harmony.

The development of interfaith places of worship through Yelim's funding and material contributions generates compelling socio-legal dynamics. This tradition not only reflects deeply ingrained cross-faith solidarity within Kei culture but also establishes a shared philanthropic space amid religious diversity. Muslim and Christian communities in the region contribute to and benefit from Yelim without discrimination, making it an enduring symbol of social cohesion in the modern era. Nevertheless, such practices have also prompted divergent perspectives, particularly among some contemporary Muslim groups holding specific religious interpretations.

Philanthropic practices are governed by all religions. In Islam, for instance, the practices are elaborated under the concepts of *zakat*, *infaq*, *sadaqah*, and *waqf*. When these funds are utilised for a common purpose that includes cross-faith interests, there are concerns about religious permissibility and operational boundaries. These reflect dynamic legal awareness, negotiating between religious norms and legal culture.

The dynamics of philanthropy in multicultural societies have long raised questions regarding the boundaries of religious law concerning the use of communal funds and aid distributions for interfaith purposes, as well as the interplay between customary norms and Islamic law within the framework of sharia economic jurisprudence. Yelim serves not only as an instrument of solidarity but also highlights the complex relationship between customary and religious legal systems. This practice warrants urgent and compelling analysis through the lens of Islamic economic law, which is orientated towards justice (*'adl*), public welfare (*maslahah*), and pluralistic values. It reflects core sharia principles such as distributive justice and transparency while demonstrating how social values, local traditions, and indigenous communal identity (Naraha et al., 2024) shape philanthropic practices. By fostering an inclusive economic system that promotes shared prosperity, Yelim exemplifies the integration of religious norms and local culture that prioritises interfaith solidarity. Moreover, it stands as a tangible case study of Islamic economic law applied within a multicultural society (Alam & Bhatti, 2024; Ulum & Putro, 2024).

Conceptually, social solidarity and philanthropy in multicultural societies constitute a key concern within legal sociology, which emphasises the importance of legal consciousness in comprehending community-based legal practices (Nugmanovna, 2021; Fauzia et al., 2021; Szilágyi, 2022; Yoserwan, 2023). Legal consciousness is closely related to the legal culture of the community (Lonthor, 2020). This theoretical framework offers a useful analytical lens for exploring the values of legal procedures and substantive law. Law is an inanimate object, which is meaningless if it is not made with awareness of its urgency and sincerity to implement it (Syamsarina et al., 2022). When linked to the concept of *muamalah fiqh*, the practice of philanthropy is placed as an integral part of an equitable wealth distribution mechanism, which offers an analytical tool to assess the validity of a customary philanthropic management and distribution based on the principles of justice, *maslahah*, and compliance with Sharia (Chapra, 2001).

Mardani (2015) identifies seven basic principles of *fiqh muamalah* (Islamic economic jurisprudence) that govern Muslim economic activity. First, *ilahiyah* relates to activities that must be in line with divine will and values. Second, *amanah* mandates responsibility, honesty and trust. Third, *maslahah* requires tangible social benefits and avoidance of harm, in accordance with *maqāṣid al-*

¹ Interviews with academics and indigenous community leaders (AK) on September 12, 2024

sharī'a (protection of faith, life, intellect, property, and offspring). *Adl* is required to ensure fair distribution of rights (obligations) to foster social righteousness. Furthermore, *ibāḥah* and contractual freedom. *ibāḥah* refers to all economic actions as basically permissible unless explicitly prohibited, while contractual freedom allows voluntary transactions that are in accordance with sharia. Lastly, ethical legitimacy pursues halal profits to ensure ethical and blessed exchanges. These principles also show that Islamic economics integrates technical, spiritual, moral, and social dimensions (Amelia & Imamah, 2024; Janah & Muchtim, 2021; Rahman et al., 2024; Raimi et al., 2025; Syamlan et al., 2025). Therefore, Yelim can be analysed through two lenses: as a customary law consciousness and as Islamic philanthropy operating within the framework of sharia economics.

Existing research on the Kei indigenous legal culture and economic system has explored several key dimensions (Syifa et al., 2023; Kabakoran, 2017; Harbelubun, 2017; Rado et al., 2023; Rumra et al., 2024). However, research analysing Yelim through interfaith legal consciousness, especially from the perspective of Islamic economic law, is limited. This gap leads this study to examine Yelim's interfaith solidarity within a socio-legal framework (sociology of law approach), which is aligned with Islamic economic principles and confirms that Islamic economic practices are intrinsically shaped by vibrant local dynamics.

Therefore, this study aims to examine interfaith solidarity within the practice of Yelim funding in the Kei community, while also evaluating the philanthropy through the lens of Islamic economic jurisprudence. The findings will contribute significantly to three key areas: Islamic law, interfaith collaboration, and customary legal systems. Specifically, it will explore how community legal consciousness shapes customary philanthropic practices that interact with sharia principles, as well as the role of local values in fostering interfaith social reconciliation and cohesion.

METHOD

Research Approach and Data

This study is qualitative research with an emphasis on the phenomenological approach. This approach was chosen to deeply explore the practice of interfaith solidarity in the management and use of Yelim funds by indigenous peoples in the Kei Islands, especially in the context of managing Yelim customary philanthropy for the construction of interfaith places of worship. This study is interpretive in nature with a focus on the interaction between customary norms, religious values, and Islamic economic law reviews.

The research locations were selected based on preliminary observations, especially villages consisting of Muslim and Christian communities that coexist and practice the management of Yelim for the construction of places of worship, such as in Ohoijang and Wain. The research subjects include traditional figures, religious leaders, and indigenous community leaders from academics and local government. Data was collected through as follows.

1. In-depth interviews. These aim to obtain normative views and empirical experiences related to Yelm's customary philanthropic practices (see informants in Table 1).
2. Participatory observation. It observes Yelim's practices in various social and religious activities.
3. Documentation of Yelim practices and processions along with other supporting documents (e.g. images, drawings, etc).

Table 1 Respondents' Profile

Name	Position and Involvement
NL	A Wain Ohoitom Muslim traditional leader who is actively involved in the delivery of Yelm between Wain Ohoi
AK	A leader of the Kei Tayando indigenous community and also an academic, who has contributed a lot through his scientific work raising anthropological studies of Kei society
JBR	Catholic Religious Leader of Ohoijang and the Chairman of the Committee in the inauguration of the St. Joseph Catholic Church
ME	Ohoi Wain Islamic Religious Leader who helps lead the delivery of Yelim of Muslims from Ohoi Wain Raja, Wain Ohoitom, and Wain to Wain Catholics in the inauguration of St. Paul's Catholic Church Wain in 2023
MZN	An indigenous community leader of Dullah Laut from the government element who was directly involved in delivering Yelim to the Tual City Government in several activities of building places of worship in Tual City
NDU	Ohoi official individual from the Southeast Maluku regional government who participated in the delivery of Yelim to St. Yosep Ohoijang Catholic Church

Note: Developed by authors

For reviewing the alignment with legal tenets and Islamic law, we use legal sociology to explain the existence and strength of laws that live in society. Especially the theory of legal awareness, to see how social and legal norms work in a multicultural and multireligious society and how legal awareness is formed and carried out collectively. Subsequently, *fiqh muamalah* is a normative framework to assess the benefits and legitimacy of Yelim from the perspective of Islamic economic law.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted as proposed by Huberman & Miles (2002) qualitatively using data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing techniques. Data validity was tested through source triangulation and member checking with key informants (Motulsky, 2021; Sulistiyo, 2023).

1. Data reduction was carried out by sorting out important information from interviews, participatory observations, and customary documentation directly related to the practice of Yelim, especially those concerning the dimensions of philanthropy and forms of community contribution, as well as management and distribution mechanisms. This process included thematic coding of informants' narratives on the meaning and philosophy of Yelim, interfaith solidarity and participation, as well as identification of sharia economic law values such as trustworthiness, *maslahah* and justice.
2. Data presentation was conducted by organising the findings in the form of descriptive narratives grouped by central themes, such as (1) the meaning, form and process of Yelim, (2) actors and management of Yelim, (3) interfaith participation, and (4) conformity with the principles of Sharia economic law. Each theme is reinforced with direct quotes from informants and documentary evidence such as documents of the Yelim delivery procession and forms of donations.
3. Conclusions were drawn by interpreting the interrelationships between data categories inductively, to gain an in-depth understanding of how Yelim practices represent the integration of customary norms and Sharia economic law values. Conclusions were drawn based on cross-confirmation between data sources and analysed in the context of legal sociology, especially the theory of legal awareness, and *muamalah principles*, especially the principle of *maqāsid al-sharī'ah*.
4. Data validity was tested through source triangulation by comparing information from traditional leaders, religious leaders, community leaders from academia and local government elements, as well as through a member checking process with key informants to ensure that the researcher's interpretation is in accordance with the informant's original meaning of the practice in question.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Practice of Yelim and Interfaith Solidarity

Yelim has been regarded as a form of customary donation carried out by the Kei people for generations. This donation is sourced from the contribution of indigenous people who are given voluntarily as stated by AK as follows.

"Yelim is from the word 'Ye' in Kei language, which means foot, and 'Lim' is hand. It means that you come directly to help people in need with your whole soul, your feet stepping and your hands giving."

Yelim literally means "feet and hands", symbolises the provision of assistance in its totality, initially focusing on traditional events such as weddings, deaths, and circumcisions, but has now expanded to include the construction of houses of worship and educational support. One of events is displayed in Figure 1. The Yelim tradition, as explained by NDU, is described as follows.

"Yelim is a tradition inherited from the ancestors of the Kei people, serving as a form of social solidarity. Here, community groups or families gather to collect goods or other assistance, which is then given to individuals or groups holding certain celebrations – irrespective of social status or religion."

Yelim in the Kei indigenous community is not restricted to monetary contributions. It also encompasses various material forms of support, including agricultural produce, livestock, foodstuffs, and other basic necessities. Furthermore, the government of Southeast Maluku Regency has preserved this tradition by participating in the Yelim procession for the ordination and inauguration of places of worship in the administrative area of Southeast Maluku. For example, the local government's involvement in the Yelim delivery procession to St. Yosep Catholic Church, where the

regent and his staff wore Kei traditional clothing and brought traditional foodstuffs such as *emba* (traditional food coming from a certain type of cassava plant), yams, bananas, beans, vegetables, coconuts, fish and *sago*. These foodstuffs are carried in '*kamboti*', which is *a container woven from coconut leaves, and tied and carried*, in keeping with the Kei ancestral tradition of transporting Yelim to support family and religious events (Leisubun, 2021).



Figure 1 Traditional event celebration

Note: Traditional procession of delivering Yelim Ohoi Somlain to Ohoi Wain



Figure 2 Forms of Yelim basic needs

Note: Yelim Basic Needs from Southeast Maluku Local Government

In Figure 2, forms of assistance are tailored to the local capabilities and potential of each community, which substantively reflects the spirit of collective participation and social care. This diversity in the forms of Yelim emphasises that the tradition's core value lies not in the nominal act of donation but in the principles of togetherness, solidarity, and social responsibility.

Regarding the management of cash funds, Yelim operates under an accountable mechanism. Based on field observations, the management of Yelim funds varies widely, involving individuals, community leaders, heads of *Matarumah* (a term for clan groups), and customary institutions. The collection and allocation of these funds are meticulously recorded and maintained with transparency. This aligns with a study by Syifa et al. (2023), which highlights that the management of Yelim funds follows structured mechanisms, encompassing collection, recording, and evaluation. These processes are detailed in Figure 3. The collective collection of funds and assistance involving all levels of society indicates a high communal legal culture, where participation is not based on formal legal obligations but on values of solidarity and social responsibility (Rado et al., 2023). Financial records and lists of material donations made by traditional leaders, as well as the open announcement of every transaction, indicate a strong social control mechanism, which Sue Cavil argues replaces the role of formal audits in the state legal system. Meanwhile, accountability

and evaluation agreed upon through deliberation reflect the application of deliberative principles in customary law, which are orientated towards social balance and community justice (Cavill, 2007).



Figure 3 Yelim's fund management system

In addition, this study found that the management of Yelim is carried out through a structured and participatory mechanism. In the perspective of the sociology of law, this management mechanism represents a real form of law that grows and runs in the social life of the community, regardless of the existence of state law. This practice shows that the Kei indigenous people have a system of managing funds and social assistance that is carried out through customary norms that are binding and collectively obeyed.

Furthermore, this research also found that interfaith Yelim is not just a form of passive tolerance but a strong expression of fraternal values. In Ohoijang, for example, the Muslim community also delivered the Yelim used for the construction and inauguration of the St. Yosep Catholic Church. JBR, a religious figure in Ohoijang, states that:

"The committee received dozens of ohoi who came to deliver Yelim from Kolser, Loon, Kelanit, Upper Ohoier, Ohoililir, Ngilngof, Namar, Ohoiluk, Debut, Rumadian, Wearlilir, Faan, Sathean, Ngabub, Lumefar, Ohoidertutu, Ohoidertom, Langgur, Vatraan, and Lairkamo."

Another event was St Paul's Catholic Church Wain in 2023. Muslims from Ohoi Wain Raja, Wain Ohoitom, and Wain Baru participated in delivering Yelim to the Wain Catholics. The active participation of Muslims in the Yelim tradition reflects the strengthening of communal identity that transcends religious boundaries. NL acknowledges brotherhood in this tradition, as stated as follows.

"We in Ohoi Wain, whether we are Muslims, Christians or Catholics, are one home, brothers".

Similarly, ME states that:

"Muslims and Catholics in Wain are brothers, and the tradition of Yelim has been set by the Kei ancestors since long ago. It is not only Muslims who deliver Yelim but vice versa, Christian brothers are also actively involved in Yelim contributions that are used for mosque construction and Hajj cost assistance."

Customary practices of Yelim play an important role in strengthening kinship and brotherhood in Kei society. The interfaith practice of Yelim in the Kei community is a tangible manifestation of social solidarity in traditional societies. In the sociology of law approach that refers to Émile Durkheim's theory of social solidarity, traditional societies tend to form mechanical solidarity (Marcucci, 2022; Fathoni, 2024), which is a form of solidarity that arises from shared norms, values and beliefs (Ikbal et al., 2020). Yelim, in this case, functions as a collective symbol that unites residents

despite different religions because it relies on ancestral values and customs that become a common heritage.

The solidarity, like Harbelubun's (2017) study, represents a communal identity that transcends religious boundaries. When Muslims and Catholics give Yelim to each other for the construction of their respective houses of worship, the act is not mere passive tolerance but rather the realisation of the collective conscience of the indigenous community. In Durkheim's perspective, values like these form the foundation of social integration and stability in society. This shows that the law in society can live and be internalised because of the strength of social solidarity.

In practice, Yelim also serves a socio-legal function, as implied by Talcott Parsons, in terms of law as a mechanism of social integration. This practice goes beyond mere social action. It demonstrates how customary norms can effectively regulate social relations even among groups of differing religious affiliations. It exemplifies what Keebet von Benda-Beckmann terms legal pluralism, wherein customary law holds strong legitimacy in governing community behaviour, sometimes surpassing the efficacy of state law (Anders, 2024; Turner & Wiber, 2024; Yoserwan, 2023). Thus, the management of Yelim is not merely a traditional economic practice but also a tangible manifestation of a living legal system, one that functions dynamically within the social fabric of the Kei community.

Yelim: Reflection of Community Legal Consciousness

In Key Society, Larvul Ngabal customary law is the basic framework governing socio-cultural and economic life. Concurrently, the philosophy of *Ain ni Ain* reinforces the principle of unity in diversity, strengthening social cohesion across class, ethnic, and religious differences (Rumra et al., 2024). AK states that:

"Yelim is intertwined in various kinship relationships of the Kei people, such as *Ain Ni Ain* (brotherhood), *Ain Lik Batang Ain* (taking care of each other), and others. This tradition strengthens social ties and strengthens relationships between community members".

MZN, an indigenous community leader from the local government of Tual city, also argues that there is an old saying regarding Yelim.

"*Umat I Minan Ne Harta I Bulir*" that people are more valuable than wealth. So Yelim is not just about the size of the donated treasure but about respecting humanity.

There is also the phrase "*nit en uk ne mav en ahang*" which, according to him, means that through Yelim, relationships that have long been severed can be revived that is strengthening the bonds of brotherhood. The legal consciousness to participate in Yelim emphasises that people are more valuable than possessions. Personal presence and direct interaction between giver and receiver are considered more valuable than simply providing material assistance. Yelim teaches and strengthens human values in Kei society.

Within the framework of legal sociology, the Yelim tradition shows a concrete expression of the legal consciousness of the Kei indigenous people. The theory of legal consciousness, as developed by thinkers such as Lawrence Friedman and Scheiber emphasizes that law is not only understood normatively as a regulation, but as a social experience that lives in the actions and meanings of individuals in society. Legal consciousness reflects the understanding, attitudes and values perceived as "law" by society (Friedman & Scheiber 2021).

Yelim as a customary philanthropic practice, strongly interwoven in local values such as *Ain Ni Ain* (one blood), *Ain Lik Batang Ain* (look after each other), and customary sayings such as "*nit en uk ne mav en ahang*" (broken relationships can be revived), reflects what Soekanto calls cultural legal awareness, where people do not just understand the rules, but believe and practice them as part of the value system of life (Syahrudin, 2023). Interestingly, this legal awareness is inclusive and able to embrace religious differences as a collective strength, not a threat of segregation.

The statement, "*Umat I Minan Ne Harta I Bulir*" (*humans are more valuable than property*), reflects the high level of legal awareness among the Kei people, who place human beings and social relations at the heart of their legal principles. This aligns with Eugen Ehrlich's view that "*the centre of gravity of legal development lies not in legislation, nor in legal science, nor in judicial decisions, but in society itself*" (Ozalp, 2023). In other words, the laws that people truly live by and adhere to are not state-imposed regulations but the norms and customs they have internalised.

In the practice of Yelim, residents do not just obey custom but feel meaningful and identified through participation in Yelim. Direct community involvement in giving and receiving Yelim shapes legal awareness of social relations, human values, and shared responsibilities. The Yelim tradition

shows that legal awareness in Kei society is shaped by strong social relationships, internalised cultural values, and the legitimacy of custom as a legal system of life (Rado et al., 2023).

Relevance and Suitability of Yelim Philanthropy under Principles of Islamic Economic Law

Yelim, as a form of customary philanthropy, embodies the essence of communal solidarity and collective responsibility within the Kei community. This practice persists today, with all community members assisting one another in fulfilling basic needs including the construction of places of worship, educational support, marriage ceremonies, funerals, and various other religious rituals. Within the context of Islamic law in terms of philanthropy, Yelim embodies sharia principles, particularly through its fulfilment of *maṣlaḥah* (public interest) and justice (Toisuta & Kabakoran, 2015). Thus, Yelim serves not only as a social mechanism for collective welfare but also demonstrates how local traditions can harmonise with Islamic teachings that prioritise communal benefit. These outcomes can be viewed through yelim as a Community Economic Practice based on *Maqāṣid al-Sharīa*.

The management of Yelim is clearly governed by the principles of transparency, trustworthiness, social accountability, and deliberation as also in the study of Syifa, et al (2024) which is reflected in the practice of customary financial recording by elders, open reports to the community, and consensus in the utilization of Yelim if there are excess funds (Syifa, et al, 2024). Yelim contains a spirit that is substantially in line with Islamic values, such as helping (*ta'āwun*), social responsibility (*mas'ūliyyah ijtima'iyyah*), and communal solidarity (*ukhūwah bashariyyah or insāniyyah*) (Mardani, 2015). In addition, Yelim reflects the values of *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*, particularly in the aspects of safeguarding wealth (*ḥifẓ al-māl*) and safeguarding the soul (*ḥifẓ al-nafs*) of the five objectives of Islamic law (Fahimah, 2018). In the context of *ḥifẓ al-māl*, funds collected from the community are managed in a trustworthy, accountable manner, and utilized for the common good so as to prevent potential misuse or community losses. Meanwhile, in the framework of *ḥifẓ al-nafs*, Yelim funds are used to help community members who experience calamities, illness, or other urgent social needs, thus becoming a tangible form of social solidarity in order to maintain the survival and welfare of indigenous peoples.

Yelim is governed by four fundamental principles including transparency, trustworthiness, social accountability, and collective deliberation. These principles manifest through traditional financial record-keeping by community elders, open reporting to the community, and consensus-based decision-making regarding surplus funds (Syifa et al., 2024). Substantively, Yelim embodies core Islamic values including mutual assistance (*ta'āwun*), social responsibility (*mas'ūliyyah ijtima'iyyah*), and human solidarity (*ukhuwwah bashariyyah or insāniyyah*) (Mardani, 2015).

Furthermore, the practice aligns with *maqāṣid al-sharīa*. In the context of *ḥifẓ al-māl*, funds collected from the community are managed in a trustworthy, accountable manner, and utilised for the common good so as to prevent potential misuse or community losses. Meanwhile, in the framework of *ḥifẓ al-nafs*, Yelim funds are used to help community members who experience calamities, illness, or other urgent social needs, thus becoming a tangible form of social solidarity in order to maintain the survival and welfare of indigenous peoples (Fahimah, 2018).

As stated by AK "*the whole soul comes and gives help*", it interprets the dimension of sincere intention and alignment with humanity, which is an important foundation in Islamic philanthropy. When analysed through the lens of Sharia economic law (Mardani, 2015), several principles of *fiqh al-mu'āmalāt* (Islamic commercial jurisprudence) are evident in the customary practices of the Kei indigenous community. The most prominent among these is the principle of *amānah* (trustworthiness and fiduciary responsibility). Under this system, these include as follows.

- a) Yelim contributions are collected voluntarily from community members
- b) Funds are stewarded by traditional leaders (adat elders)
- c) Management follows a transparent process
- d) Manual record-keeping in communal ledgers
- e) Open financial reporting to all members

This framework demonstrates how collective responsibility and mutual trust form the cornerstone of resource governance. Notably, Yelim operates as an inclusive mechanism in which participation extends across religious and social strata, and benefits are distributed equitably according to need. The practice thus embodies both Islamic ethical principles and indigenous communal values through its operational system.

The principle of *maṣlaḥah* is clearly evident in this practice. Yelim is not only used for individual needs such as wedding and circumcision costs but also for public interests such as the construction of houses of worship and educational assistance. The benefits of Yelim that touch various aspects of people's lives are also elaborated in previous studies by Sujoko (2015), Abdoeh (2020), Thalib et al. (2023), which show that philanthropic practices based on local cultural values such as this are in line

with *maqāṣid al-Sharīa*, namely protecting property (*hifz al-māl*) and protecting the soul (*hifz al-nafs*), in order to fulfil survival and benefit.

Within shari‘ah economic jurisprudence, philanthropic funds such as *zakat*, *infaq*, and *waqf* serve a distributive function that extends beyond co-religionists. Their disbursement may include non-Muslim beneficiaries when justified by *maṣlaḥah* (public interest). This position finds support in classical scholarship, including Imām al-Nawawī (d. 676 AH), and Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah (d. 751 AH). Both of whom advocated flexibility in the allocation of social funds (Murodi, 2021).

The Yelim tradition and Islamic economic principles collectively demonstrate that local philanthropy can achieve *fiqh* validation (*ta’ṣīl fiqhī*) when administered with justice (‘*adl*), managed transparently, not contravening *sharīa* norms, and inclusivity aligns with Islamic objectives, provided that the core purpose maintains communal welfare, and distribution follows need-based rather than confessional criteria.

CONCLUSION

The Yelim tradition within Kei indigenous society represents a distinctive form of customary philanthropy that embodies both the legal consciousness of multicultural communities and a profound spirit of communal solidarity rooted in local wisdom. By functioning as a cross-generational, Yelim incorporates core principles of Islamic economic law, particularly distributive justice, operational transparency, and the preservation of fundamental social values. From a legal theory perspective, Yelim operates as living law, which is an organic manifestation of legal consciousness emerging from sustained communal practice. This normative framework actively shapes all aspects of the Yelim, including contribution mechanisms (voluntary participatory structures), fund stewardship (collectively managed fiduciary systems), and resource allocation (needs-based distributive models). Crucially, Yelim maintains substantive alignment with *maqāṣid al-Sharīa*, specifically through *Hifz al-Māl* (asset preservation via accountable wealth management), *Hifz al-Nafs* (protection of life or dignity through social safety nets), and *Ta’āwun* (institutionalised mutual aid for communal welfare). This jurisprudential harmony positions Yelim as a viable paradigm for community-based Islamic philanthropy. The synthesis of customary law with Islamic economic law principles presents a compelling local framework for developing context-sensitive Islamic philanthropy regulations, informing national policy on community endowment systems, and modelling culturally grounded distributive justice mechanisms for the national context.

This study also has some limitations, as it focuses more on the normative and qualitative dimensions, so it has not quantitatively described the economic impact of Yelim on community welfare, nor compared similar practices in other indigenous communities that also have local philanthropic traditions. In addition, deeper theological issues, especially regarding differences in *fiqh* views on interfaith contributions, have not been discussed extensively owing to be in a different context.

As a direction for further study, this research opens space for further exploration in the form of quantitative empirical approaches, comparative analysis between regions, or the development of Islamic economic law policy models based on local community philanthropic practices.

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