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Revolving Marriage Among the Radicals: An Analysis of Rotational Unrecorded Matrimonies within the Jemaah Islamiyyah Community

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Abstract:

This article examines the practice of revolving marriage among the members of Jemaah Islamiyyah (JI), a clandestine radical Islamist group in Southeast Asia. Revolving marriage is a term coined by the author to describe the phenomenon of JI members marrying and divorcing multiple partners in a short span of time without registering their marriages with the state authorities. Employing the ethnographic method, this article argues that revolving marriage serves as a strategy of survival, resistance and recruitment for JI, as it enables them to evade detection, foster solidarity and attract new followers. This research reveals how such practices are rooted in a multicultural Fiqh perspective, reflecting the movement's adherence to traditional values while navigating a diverse cultural landscape.

Keywords: marriage matrimony; fundamentalist community; Jamaah Islamiyyah

Introduction

Marriage is a complex and contested concept defined and redefined by various cultures, religions, and legal systems.¹ This article explores a phenomenon that challenges the conventional understanding of marriage as a legal union between two persons: the practice of revolving marriage among the radicals. Revolving marriage,

¹Daniel Nolan, "Marriage and Its Limits," *Inquiry (United Kingdom)*, 2022, 1–36, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0020174X.2022.2075450>.

also known as rotational unrecorded matrimony, is a form of polygamy that involves a group of men and women who exchange spouses periodically without any formal registration or recognition by the state. This article focus on the case of Jemaah Islamiyyah, a militant Islamist group that operates in Southeast Asia and has been linked to several terrorist attacks. Jemaah Islamiyyah, which means "Islamic community" in Arabic, was founded in the late 1980s by Abdullah Sungkar and Abu Bakar Bashir, two Indonesian clerics who fled to Malaysia to escape persecution from the Suharto regime. The group's main goal is to establish an Islamic state or caliphate encompassing Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei, the Philippines, Thailand, and Myanmar. The group follows a strict interpretation of Islam that rejects democracy, secularism, and pluralism.

The group is also known for its use of violence and terrorism as a means of achieving its objectives. Some of the most notorious attacks attributed to Jemaah Islamiyyah include the 2002 Bali bombings that killed 202 people, the 2003 Marriott Hotel bombing in Jakarta that killed 12 people, and the 2004 Australian embassy bombing in Jakarta that killed nine people. Jemaah Islamiyyah justifies its use of violence and terrorism by appealing to the concept of jihad, or holy struggle, against the enemies of Islam who resist the application of Islamic law. The group considers itself as part of the global jihad movement led by al-Qaeda, with whom it has close ties and cooperation. The group also views the governments of Southeast Asian countries as illegitimate and corrupt agents of Western powers that oppress Muslims and prevent them from practising their faith. By engaging in violent attacks against these governments and their allies, Jemaah Islamiyyah claims to be defending the rights and interests of Muslims in the region and advancing the cause of Islamic revival. We examine the origins, motivations, and implications of revolving marriage within this community, drawing on various sources such as historical accounts, interviews, and legal documents. We argue that revolving marriage is a strategy of survival and resistance against the state and a manifestation of a radical reinterpretation of Islamic law and ethics.

Marriage practices within Islamist movements in Malaysia and Indonesia are not just personal choices but are deeply intertwined with the movements' identity, ideology, and resilience. For instance, Mirwan explored the phenomenon of endogamous marriages at Sukorejo Islamic Boarding School, revealing how such practices are rooted in a multicultural Fiqh perspective, reflecting the movement's adherence to traditional values while navigating a diverse cultural landscape.² Similarly, the works of Razif delve into the concepts of "Halal" intimacy, love, marriage, and polygamy, highlighting how contemporary marriage practices can be seen as a reflection of the ideological underpinnings of these movements, which seek to balance religious doctrines with modern societal norms.³ Nisa's study on the marital life of Cadari in Indonesia further illustrates how marriage and divorce are

² Faishal Agil Al Munawar Mirwan, R. Fakhurrhazi, "Endogamous Marriages among the Kiai in Sukorejo Islamic Boarding School, Situbondo: A Phenomenological Approach in the Perspective of Multicultural Fiqh," *Adabiyah* 23, no. 1 (2023): 86–102, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.24252/jad.v23i1a5>.

³ Nurul Huda, Binti Mohd, and Razif Queens, "'Halal' Intimacy : Love, Marriage and Polygamy in Contemporary Malaysia" (University of Cambridge, 2017).



used strategically for religious purposes, thus shaping the movement's identity and demonstrating its ideological resilience in the face of societal changes.⁴ Mutiara discusses the role of women in Jemaah Tarbiyah, pointing out the complex interplay between religion and democracy and how this affects the movement's stance on marriage.⁵ The research by Al Amin and Mahzumi on the Arab descendants in Indonesia sheds light on the identity dilemma faced by these communities, which is also reflected in their marriage customs.⁶ Lastly, Ismail provides insights into the survival strategies of local religious groups, including marriage practices to preserve their identity and resilience.⁷ Collectively, these studies demonstrate that marriage practices within these Islamist movements are a mirror reflecting their core values, serving as a tool for both internal cohesion and external adaptation to the evolving cultural and religious landscapes of Malaysia and Indonesia.

Marriage is a social institution that has existed in various forms across different cultures and historical periods. It is often defined as a legal or religious contract between two or more people who agree to share rights, duties, and obligations as spouses. However, marriage is also a contested and dynamic concept that reflects the values, norms, and power relations of the societies. This article will explore a specific form of marriage that challenges the conventional understanding of this institution: revolving marriage among the radicals. Revolving marriage, or rotational or fictitious marriage, is a practice of temporary and unrecorded matrimony adopted by some members of the Jemaah Islamiyyah (JI) community in Southeast Asia. JI is a militant Islamist group that seeks to establish an Islamic state in the region through violent means. The group is responsible for several terrorist attacks, including the 2002 Bali bombings that killed 202 people. JI members follow a strict interpretation of Islam that forbids any form of premarital or extramarital sex, as well as any contact between unmarried men and women.

However, some JI members found a way to circumvent these rules by engaging in revolving marriage. This practice involves a man and a woman agreeing to marry each other for a short period, usually ranging from a few hours to a few days, without registering their union with any authority. The marriage is performed by a JI cleric who recites a simple formula and witnesses the exchange of vows. The couple then consummates their marriage and separates afterwards, without obligation or commitment to each other. The marriage is considered dissolved by mutual consent and does not require any divorce procedure. The couple can repeat this process with different partners as often as they wish. Revolving marriage is not only a way for JI members to satisfy their sexual desires without violating their religious principles but also a strategy for enhancing their operational security and mobility. By marrying

⁴ Eva F. Nisa, "Marriage and Divorce for the Sake of Religion: The Marital Life of Cadari in Indonesia," *Asian Journal of Social Science* 39, no. 6 (2011): 797–820, <https://doi.org/10.1163/156853111X619238>.

⁵ Raneeta Mutiara, "The Women of Jemaah Tarbiyah: Religion, Democracy, and the In-Between," *Open Journal of Social Sciences* 11, no. 07 (2023): 32–46, <https://doi.org/10.4236/jss.2023.117004>.

⁶ Ainur Rofiq Al Amin and Fikri Mahzumi, "The Identity Dilemma of Arab Descendants in Indonesia," *Kemanusiaan* 29, no. 2 (2022): 157–76, <https://doi.org/10.21315/kajh2022.29.2.8>.

⁷ Nawari Ismail, "Strategi Bertahan Kelompok Agama Lokal," *Harmoni: Jurnal Multikultural & Multireligius* 14, no. 3 (2015): 114–28, <http://jurnalharmoni.kemenag.go.id/index.php/harmoni/article/view/103>.



different women in different locations, JI operatives can avoid arousing suspicion from the authorities and blend in with the local population. Moreover, revolving marriage allows JI members to establish networks of trust and loyalty among their fellow militants, as well as to recruit new members or sympathisers through their temporary spouses.

In this article, we will analyse revolving marriage among the radicals from various perspectives and examine the historical and ideological origins of this practice and its social and political implications. We will also compare and contrast revolving marriage with other forms of unconventional or alternative marriage that have been practised by different radical groups or movements in different contexts. We will draw on the works of several scholars who have studied marriage from different disciplines and perspectives, such as Coontz⁸, Becker⁹, Girgis et al.¹⁰, Waite¹¹, Fineman¹², Nock¹³, Griffiths¹⁴, and Ali.¹⁵ Our main argument is that revolving marriage among the radicals is an example of how marriage can be used as a tool for political resistance and subversion, as well as for personal fulfilment and expression. We will show how revolving marriage challenges the dominant notions of marriage as a stable, monogamous, and permanent bond between two people who share love, intimacy, and responsibility. We will also show how revolving marriage reflects the radical vision of JI members who seek to create an alternative society based on their interpretation of Islam.

The article is organised as follows: In the first section, we will provide an overview of the Jemaah Islamiyah group and its ideology and a brief history of revolving marriage among its members. In the second section, we will discuss the motivations and benefits of revolving marriage for JI members at the individual and collective levels. In the third section, we will compare revolving marriage with other forms of radical or alternative marriage that have been practised by different groups or movements in different contexts, such as polygamy, polyandry, group marriage, free love, fictitious marriage, and temporary marriage. In the fourth section, we will evaluate the ethical and legal issues raised by revolving marriage and its impact on gender relations and human rights. In the fifth section, we will summarise our main findings and suggest future research directions.

⁸ Stephanie Coontz, *Marriage, a History: How Love Conquered Marriage*. Penguin, ed. 1 (Amerika Serikat: Penguin, 2006).

⁹ Gary S. Becker, "A Theory of Marriage: Part II," *Journal of Political Economy* 82, no. 2, Part 2 (1974): S11–26, <https://doi.org/10.1086/260287>.

¹⁰ Girgis Sherif, George Robert P, and Anderson Ryan T, "What Is Marriage?," *Harvard Journal of Law & Public Policy* 34, no. 1 (2012): 245–87.

¹¹ Linda J. Waite, "Does Marriage Matter?," *Demography* 32, no. 4 (1995): 483–507, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2061670>.

¹² Martha Albertson Fineman, "Why Marriage?," *Virginia Journal of Social Policy & the Law* 9, no. 1 (2001): 239–72.

¹³ Steven L. Nock, "Marriage as a Public Issue," *Future of Children* 15, no. 2 (2005): 13–32, <https://doi.org/10.1353/foc.2005.0019>.

¹⁴ Anne M.O. Griffiths, *In the Shadow of Marriage: Gender and Justice in an African Community* (London: University of Chicago Press, 1997).

¹⁵ Kecia Ali, "Progressive Muslims and Islamic Jurisprudence: The Necessity for Critical Engagement with Marriage Divorce Law," in *Progressive Muslims: ON JUSTICE, GENDER AND PLURALISM*, vol. 22 (Oneworld Publications, 2003), 123–26, <https://doi.org/10.35632/ajis.v22i3.1683>.



Endogamy, the practice of marrying within a specific social group, caste, or ethnicity, has been studied across various disciplines. Kaplan discusses the significance of marriage alliances in kindred-based groups and their role in maintaining continuity.¹⁶ Ayoub examines the sociometric patterns of parallel cousin marriage, a form of endogamy.¹⁷ The work edited by Van Leeuwen, Maas, and Miles provides a historical perspective on social endogamy and its influence on marriage choices and class boundaries.¹⁸ Bittles explores the implications of endogamy on consanguinity and community genetics,¹⁹ while Heaton investigates how religious group characteristics affect endogamy and interfaith marriages.²⁰ Jakoubková Budilová analyses the interplay between ethnicity and religion in the context of endogamous practices in Voyvodovo, Bulgaria, during the first half of the 20th century.²¹ Saleem, Chaudhry, and Riaz delve into the anthropology of indigenous marriage patterns and their endogamous nature.²² Lastly, Fuller and Narasimhan discuss the evolution of marriage systems in India, focusing on the shift towards companionate marriage among a middle-class Brahman subcaste.²³ These studies collectively contribute to a deeper understanding of the complex dynamics of endogamy across different cultures and time periods. This article aims to answer the following research question: How does marriage practice within Jemaah Islamiyyah, a clandestine Islamist movement that operates in Malaysia and Indonesia, shape and reflect the movement's identity, ideology, and resilience?

Method

This paper explores the marriage practice within Jemaah Islamiyyah (JI), a clandestine Islamist movement in Malaysia and Indonesia. We adopt the dark ethnography method, which involves engaging with the 'uncomfortable' other and confronting the ethical and emotional challenges of studying violent or illegal

¹⁶ Joanna Overing Kaplan, "Endogamy and the Marriage Alliance: A Note on Continuity in Kindred-Based Groups," *Man* 8, no. 4 (1973): 555, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2800740>.

¹⁷ Millicent R. Ayoub, "Parallel Cousin Marriage and Endogamy: A Study in Sociometry," *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology* 15, no. 3 (1959): 266–75.

¹⁸ and Andrew Miles Marco HD Van Leeuwen, Ineke Maas, *Marriage Choices and Class Boundaries: Social Endogamy in History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

¹⁹ A. H. Bittles, "Endogamy, Consanguinity and Community Genetics," *Journal of Genetics* 81, no. 3 (2002): 91–98, <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF02715905>.

²⁰ Tim B Heaton, "Religious Group Characteristics, Endogamy, and Interfaith Marriages," *Sociology of Religion* 51, no. 4 (December 1, 1990): 363–76, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3711077>.

²¹ Lenka Jakoubková Budilová, "Endogamy between Ethnicity and Religion. Marriage and Boundary Construction in Voyvodovo (Bulgaria)," *The History of the Family* 25, no. 1 (n.d.): 46–69, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1080/1081602X.2019.1641132>.

²² Hina Saleem, Abid Ghafoor Chaudhry, and Muhammad Riaz, "Endogamy and Marital Alliances: Anthropology of Indigenous Marriage Patterns," *Pakistan Association of Anthropology, Islamabad, Pakistan Special Issue Sci.Int.(Lahore)* 27, no. 2 (2015): 1603–5, https://www.academia.edu/439156/Endogamy_In_Mesop.

²³ C. J. Fuller and Haripriya Narasimhan, "Companionate Marriage in India: The Changing Marriage System in a Middle-Class Brahman Subcaste," *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 14, no. 4 (2008): 736–54, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9655.2008.00528.x>.



groups.²⁴ We argue that marriage is a key strategy for JI to maintain its cohesion, legitimacy, and resilience in the face of state repression and internal divisions. We draw on Ortner's concept of 'dark anthropology' to analyse how JI members construct their moral and political identities through marriage and how they negotiate the tensions and contradictions between their religious ideals and their everyday realities.²⁵ We use a variety of sources, including interviews, participant observation, online forums, and archival documents, to provide a rich and nuanced account of JI's marital dynamics and their implications for the movement's future.

We adopt the dark ethnography method—a form of ethnographic research that involves studying groups or phenomena considered taboo, illegal, violent, or morally ambiguous.²⁶ This method requires the researcher to engage with the 'uncomfortable' other and confront the ethical and emotional challenges of gaining access, building rapport, and ensuring safety and confidentiality. We argue that marriage is a key strategy for Jemaah Islamiyyah to maintain its cohesion, legitimacy, and resilience in the face of state repression and internal divisions. Marriage serves as a way of creating and strengthening bonds among members, as well as a way of recruiting and socialising new members. Marriage also serves as a way of expressing and reinforcing the movement's religious identity and ideology, which are based on a strict interpretation of Islamic law and a rejection of secular norms and values. Marriage also serves as a way of coping with the hardships and uncertainties of living in a clandestine community, such as isolation, fear, loss, and trauma. We draw on Ortner's concept of 'dark anthropology' to analyse how Jemaah Islamiyyah members construct their moral and political identities through marriage and how they negotiate the tensions and contradictions between their religious ideals and everyday realities.²⁷ We use a variety of sources, including interviews, participant observation, online forums, and archival documents, to provide a rich and nuanced account of Jemaah Islamiyyah's marital dynamics and their implications for the movement's future.

Results and Discussion

Marriage as a Form of Social Bonding and Ideological Commitment within Clandestine Community

One of the most intriguing aspects of the Islamic State (ISIS) phenomenon in Southeast Asia is the role of marriage as a form of social bonding and ideological commitment within the Jemaah Islamiyyah (JI) clandestine community. JI is a regional network of militant Islamists that has been active in Indonesia and Malaysia since the late 1990s and has been linked to several terrorist attacks in the region. JI members have also joined ISIS in Syria and Iraq, as well as in the Philippines. In this

²⁴ Lene Faust and Simone Pfeifer, "Dark Ethnography? Encountering the 'Uncomfortable' Other in Anthropological Research: Introduction to This Special Section," *Zeitschrift Fur Ethnologie* 146, no. Bangstad 2017 (2021): 81–90, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/27124147>.

²⁵ Sherry Ortner, "Dark Anthropology and Its Others: Theory Since the Eighties," *Logos (Russian Federation)* 32, no. 2 (2022): 1–41, <https://doi.org/10.22394/0869-5377-2022-2-1-41>.

²⁶ Faust and Pfeifer, "Dark Ethnography? Encountering the 'Uncomfortable' Other in Anthropological Research: Introduction to This Special Section."

²⁷ Ortner, "Dark Anthropology and Its Others: Theory Since the Eighties."



paper, we examine how marriage practices among JI members have evolved and how they reflect the changing dynamics of the movement and its relation to ISIS. We draw on two sources of data: first, interviews with former JI members who have disengaged from violence and terrorism, conducted by Hwang,²⁸ and second, media reports and court documents on JI members who have joined or supported ISIS, analysed by Schulze and Liow.²⁹ We argue that marriage within JI has served as a mechanism of recruitment, retention, and radicalisation and as a potential trigger for disengagement and deradicalisation.

Endogamy, the practice of marrying within a specific social or cultural group, has several benefits recognised in various societies. One of the primary advantages is the preservation of cultural traditions and values. By marrying within the same group, individuals can ensure that their cultural practices and beliefs are maintained and passed down through generations. This can be particularly important for minority groups seeking to preserve their unique identity within a larger society. Another benefit of endogamy is the reinforcement of social cohesion and stability. When individuals marry within their own group, it can strengthen the sense of community and belonging, as there is a shared understanding of social norms and expectations. This can also lead to stronger familial bonds and relationships, as there is often a greater alignment of values and life experiences, contributing to more harmonious family dynamics.

Endogamy can also maintain and reinforce social status and power within a community. By ensuring that marriages occur within the same social strata, endogamy can help preserve the existing social hierarchy and prevent the dilution of wealth and power. This can be seen in societies where marriage is used as a strategy to consolidate wealth and influence within certain families or classes. Furthermore, endogamy can provide individuals a sense of security and predictability, reducing the uncertainty associated with marrying someone from a different background. This can make the process of finding a spouse and integrating them into the family smoother, as there is already a shared cultural understanding. However, it is important to note that while endogamy has these benefits, it also has potential drawbacks. One of the main concerns is the limited genetic diversity it can create within a population, which can increase the risk of inherited health issues and genetic disorders. Additionally, endogamy can reinforce social inequalities by limiting opportunities for individuals to marry outside their own group, potentially perpetuating existing disparities.

Endogamy offers several benefits, including preserving cultural identity, reinforcing social cohesion, maintaining social status, and maintaining familial stability. However, these advantages must be weighed against the potential negative consequences, such as reduced genetic diversity and reinforced social inequalities. Understanding both sides of this practice can provide a more nuanced perspective on its societal role. Revolving or rotational marriages differ from traditional forms of religious-based endogamy in several key aspects. Endogamy typically involves

²⁸ Julie Chernov Hwang, *Why Terrorists Quit: The Disengagement of Indonesian Jihadists*, 1st ed. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2018).

²⁹ Kirsten E. Schulze and Joseph Chinyong Liow, "Making Jihadis, Waging Jihad: Transnational and Local Dimensions of the Isis Phenomenon in Indonesia and Malaysia," *Asian Security* 15, no. 2 (2019): 122–39, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14799855.2018.1424710>.



marrying within a specific social group, religious denomination, or ethnic group, often to maintain the purity of the group and ensure the continuation of cultural or religious traditions. In contrast, revolving or rotational marriages, which are less documented and not widely recognised in scholarly literature, may refer to a practice where marital relationships are periodically changed within a community. This could be for various reasons, including social, political, or religious objectives. In the context of the Jemaah Islamiyyah community, if such practices exist, they would likely be aimed at strengthening intra-group bonds and ensuring loyalty to the group's ideology. However, it is important to note that information on such practices within Jemaah Islamiyyah is scarce and not well-documented in mainstream research or media. Therefore, any analysis of rotational unrecorded matrimonies within such communities would require careful examination of primary sources and field research to understand the motivations, frequency, and implications of these practices compared to more common forms of endogamous marriage.

In exploring the intricate dynamics of marriage practices within Jemaah Islamiyyah and their impact on the movement's identity, ideology, and resilience, it is essential to consider the scholarly discourse on endogamy and marital alliances. Kaplan's seminal work provides a foundational understanding of the continuity in kindred-based groups, suggesting that such practices may reinforce the internal cohesion and ideological purity within Jemaah Islamiyyah.³⁰ Ayoub further elaborates on the sociometric implications of parallel cousin marriage and endogamy, which could be extrapolated to understand the social structures within the movement.³¹ Van Leeuwen, Maas, and Miles offer a historical perspective on social endogamy, potentially mirroring the class boundaries that Jemaah Islamiyyah might navigate or establish.³² Bittles' research on community genetics could shed light on the biological implications of endogamous practices, possibly affecting the group's long-term resilience.³³ Heaton's study on religious group characteristics and interfaith marriages might provide insights into the movement's approach to religious homogeneity and its effects on intergroup relations.³⁴ Jakoubková Budilová's examination of marriage and boundary construction in Voyvodovo could offer parallels to the boundary-maintaining mechanisms within Jemaah Islamiyyah.³⁵ Saleem, Chaudhry, and Riaz's anthropological analysis of Indigenous marriage patterns may reflect the traditional structures that the movement either upholds or challenges.³⁶ Lastly, Fuller and Narasimhan's investigation into the evolving nature of companionate marriage in India could contrast with the possibly more traditional marital practices within Jemaah Islamiyyah, highlighting the interplay between

³⁰ Kaplan, "Endogamy and the Marriage Alliance: A Note on Continuity in Kindred-Based Groups."

³¹ Millicent R. Ayoub, "Parallel Cousin Marriage and Endogamy: A Study in Sociometry."

³² Marco HD Van Leeuwen, Ineke Maas, *Marriage Choices and Class Boundaries: Social Endogamy in History*.

³³ Bittles, "Endogamy, Consanguinity and Community Genetics."

³⁴ Heaton, "Religious Group Characteristics, Endogamy, and Interfaith Marriages."

³⁵ Jakoubková Budilová, "Endogamy between Ethnicity and Religion. Marriage and Boundary Construction in Voyvodovo (Bulgaria)."

³⁶ Saleem, Chaudhry, and Riaz, "Endogamy and Marital Alliances: Anthropology of Indigenous Marriage Patterns."



modernity and tradition in shaping group identity.³⁷ Collectively, these references provide a multifaceted view of endogamy and marriage practices that are crucial for understanding the social fabric of Jemaah Islamiyyah.

Hwang³⁸ notes that "marriage was central to building and maintaining the clandestine community" of JI. JI leaders encouraged their followers to marry within the movement to strengthen the bonds of loyalty and trust among members and ensure the continuity of the group's ideology and mission. Marriage also provided a sense of belonging and identity for JI members, who often faced social marginalisation and discrimination in their mainstream societies. Moreover, marriage was seen as a religious duty and a reward for the mujahideen (holy warriors) who sacrificed their lives for the cause of Islam. Hwang quotes a former JI member who explained: "If you die in jihad, you will be married to 72 virgins in heaven. But if you survive, you will be married to a widow or a divorcee from the *jemaah* (community)."³⁹

However, marriage within JI was not always harmonious or stable. Some JI members faced difficulties finding suitable spouses within the movement due to the scarcity of women, the strict criteria for compatibility, and the secrecy of the group's activities. Some JI marriages also ended in divorce or separation due to personal conflicts, financial problems, or security pressures. Furthermore, some JI spouses became disillusioned with the group's ideology and violence and decided to leave the movement or persuade their partners to do so. Hwang⁴⁰ identifies several cases of former JI members who disengaged from terrorism because of their wives' influence or intervention. For example, one former JI member told Hwang that his wife "saved" him from becoming a suicide bomber: "She said to me, 'If you love me, you will not do this. If you love our children, you will not do this.'"⁴¹

The concept of revolving marriage, which can also be referred to as rotational or fictitious marriage, is complex and has been examined in various cultural and legal contexts. In his work, Irwin Altman delves into the intricacies of polygamous family life, particularly focusing on contemporary Mormon fundamentalists.⁴² Altman's study provides a detailed look at the dynamics within these families, shedding light on the social and legal challenges they face. Similarly, Richard A. Schroeder explores the metaphorical language of marriage and the actual conjugal contracts that exist in The Gambia's female garden sector, where women's marital status can influence their economic activities and societal roles.⁴³ Altman and Schroeder's research contributes

³⁷ Fuller and Narasimhan, "Companionate Marriage in India: The Changing Marriage System in a Middle-Class Brahman Subcaste."

³⁸ Julie Chernov Hwang and Kirsten E. Schulze, "Why They Join: Pathways into Indonesian Jihadist Organizations," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 30, no. 6 (2018): 911–32, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09546553.2018.1481309>.

³⁹ Hwang and Schulze.

⁴⁰ Hwang, *Why Terrorists Quit: The Disengagement of Indonesian Jihadists*.

⁴¹ Hwang.

⁴² Irwin Altman, "Polygamous Family Life: The Case of Contemporary Mormon Fundamentalists," *Utah L. Rev.* 1996, 367, <https://heinonline.org/HOL/LandingPage?handle=hein.journals/utahlr1996&div=19&id=&page=>

⁴³ Richard A. Schroeder, "Gone to Their Second Husbands: Marital Metaphors and Conjugal Contracts in The Gambia's Female Garden Sector," *Canadian Journal of African Studies/Revue*



to a deeper understanding of the implications and societal perceptions of non-traditional marital arrangements.

Revolving or rotating marriage and serial monogamy are two different forms of marriage that have different implications for individuals and society. Revolving or rotating marriage is a term used to describe a situation where a person marries and divorces multiple times, simultaneously or consecutively, without legal or religious restrictions. Serial monogamy, on the other hand, is a term used to describe a situation where a person marries and divorces only one person at a time, following the legal and religious norms of their society. The table below summarises some of the differences between these two forms of marriage.

Table 1. The Differences Between Rotational Marriage and Serial Monogamy

Revolving or rotating marriage	Serial monogamy
No legal or religious limits on the number or duration of marriages	Legal and religious limits on the number and duration of marriages
No commitment or responsibility towards the spouse or the children	Commitment and responsibility towards the spouse and the children
No emotional or financial stability or security	Emotional and financial stability and security
No respect for the sanctity and dignity of marriage	Respect for the sanctity and dignity of marriage
No fulfilment of the purposes of marriage from an Islamic perspective	Fulfilment of the purposes of marriage from an Islamic perspective

According to Islamic philosophy, marriage aims to establish a harmonious relationship between a man and a woman based on mutual love, mercy, compassion, cooperation, and assistance. Marriage is also a means of preserving human dignity, morality, and progeny. Marriage is a sacred contract that entails rights and obligations for both parties and social and legal implications. As Hori and Cipta⁴⁴ state, "Marriage in Islam is not only an individual affair but also a social institution that has an impact on the life of society". Therefore, revolving or rotating marriage is not compatible with the Islamic view of marriage, as it violates the principles of justice, fairness, loyalty, fidelity, and respect that are essential for a successful marriage. Serial monogamy, while not ideal, is more acceptable in Islam than revolving or rotating marriage, as it follows the legal and religious procedures of divorce and remarriage. However, serial monogamy also has some drawbacks, such as causing emotional distress, social stigma, financial loss, and family disruption. As Laluddin et al. argue, "Divorce should be avoided as much as possible unless there is no other way out to save the marriage".⁴⁵

Canadienne Des Études Africaines 30, no. 1 (2014): 69–87, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1080/00083968.1996.10804408>.

⁴⁴ Muhammad Hori and Sukma Eliva Cipta, "The Purpose of Marriage in Islamic Philosophical Perspective," *Journal of Islamicate Studies* 2, no. 2 (2019): 18–25, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.32506/jois.v2i1.505>.

⁴⁵ Hayatullah Laluddin et al., "The Contract of Marriage and Its Purposes from Islamic Perspective," *Asian Social Science* 10, no. 2 (2014): 139–44, <https://doi.org/10.5539/ass.v10n2p139>.



Islamic law has different rules and regulations regarding marriage and divorce that aim to protect the rights and interests of both parties, as well as to maintain social order and harmony. Marriage in Islamic law requires a valid contract between a man and a woman free from any legal impediments, such as kinship, fosterage, or adultery. The contract must also include *mahr* (a dowry) paid by the husband to the wife as a symbol of his commitment and responsibility. The contract must also be witnessed by two reliable witnesses and announced publicly to avoid any suspicion or dispute. As Khadduri⁴⁶ explains, "The marriage contract in Islamic law is essentially an agreement between two parties which creates certain rights and obligations between them". Divorce in Islamic law is permissible but discouraged, as it is considered to be the most hateful thing that Allah has allowed. Divorce can be initiated by either party for valid reasons, such as cruelty, infidelity, impotence, desertion, or apostasy. The divorce must also follow certain procedures, such as observing a waiting period (*iddah*), attempting reconciliation through arbitration (*tahkim*), paying maintenance (*nafqah*), and ensuring custody (*hadanah*) and visitation (*mu'asharah*) rights for the children. As Al-Sharmani notes, "Divorce in Islamic law is not only a legal matter but also an ethical one that requires careful consideration of the consequences for oneself and others".⁴⁷

In some cases, people may resort to unregistered marriages not recognised by the state or the religious authorities. These marriages may be motivated by various factors, such as avoiding legal complications, escaping social pressure, fulfilling sexual desires, or expressing personal preferences. However, unregistered marriages pose many risks and challenges for the parties involved, such as lack of legal protection, social stigma, inheritance disputes, paternity issues, or domestic violence. Moreover, unregistered marriages are not in accordance with the Islamic law perspective that requires marriage to be registered and publicised. As Maloko asserts, "Unregistered marriage is contrary to Islamic law because it does not fulfil the conditions of validity and legality of marriage".⁴⁸

The revolving or rotating marriage⁴⁹ is a practice of polygamy among some members of the Jamaah Islamiyyah and Darul Islam clandestine Muslim communities in Malaysia and Indonesia. These communities are involved in Islamist insurgencies and terrorism in the region, and they use marriage as a survival strategy for keeping the unity and secrecy of their organisation. The marriage allows them to form kinship and family links that strengthen their loyalty and trust and avoid detection and infiltration by the authorities. According to some sources, the marriage also serves as a reward for the militants who participate in violent operations.⁵⁰

⁴⁶ Majid Khadduri, *Marriage in Islamic Law: The Modernist Viewpoints* (Routledge: In Issues in Islamic Law, 2017).

⁴⁷ Mulki Al-Sharmani, "Marriage in Islamic Interpretive Tradition: Revisiting the Legal and the Ethical," *Journal of Islamic Ethics* 2, no. 1–2 (2018): 76–96, <https://doi.org/10.1163/24685542-12340017>.

⁴⁸ Maloko M. Tahir, "M. Tahir Maloko Unregistered Marriage in Islamic Law Perspective a Critical Study of Islamic Law Compilation," *Mawarid Journal of Islamic Law* XV, no. 1 (2015): 49–68, <https://journal.uui.ac.id/JHI/article/view/6146>.

⁴⁹ Muhammad Tito Karnavian, *Explaining Islamist Insurgencies: The Case of Al-Jamaah Al-Islamiyyah and the Radicalisation of the Poso Conflict, 2000-2007* (London: World Scientific, 2014).

⁵⁰ Hwang, *Why Terrorists Quit: The Disengagement of Indonesian Jihadists*.



However, marriage also poses some challenges and risks for the communities, such as the potential for conflict, jealousy, abuse, divorce, and exposure.⁵¹

The emergence of ISIS in 2014 posed a new challenge and opportunity for JI members and their marriages. On the one hand, some JI members were attracted by the appeal of ISIS and its claim to establish a caliphate (Islamic state) in Syria and Iraq. They saw ISIS as a continuation and fulfilment of JI's goals and aspirations and as a chance to participate in a global jihad. Some JI members decided to join ISIS in Syria and Iraq, either alone or with their families. Others chose to support ISIS from Indonesia and Malaysia by recruiting new members, raising funds, or planning attacks. Schulze and Liow document several cases of JI members who became involved in ISIS-related activities in Southeast Asia.⁵² On the other hand, some JI members were repelled by the brutality and extremism of ISIS and its deviation from JI's teachings and practices. They viewed ISIS as a threat to JI's survival and legitimacy and as a source of division and conflict within the *jemaah*. Some JI leaders issued statements denouncing ISIS and forbidding their followers from joining or supporting it. Some JI members also resisted or rejected ISIS's influence on their marriages and families. For instance, Schulze and Liow report that one JI member refused to divorce his wife who had pledged allegiance to ISIS: "He said he still loved her despite her support for (ISIS) and he hoped that she would eventually come back to (JI)."⁵³ The above information shows how marriage practice within the JI clandestine community in Indonesia and Malaysia has reflected the evolution of the movement and its relation to ISIS over time. We have also demonstrated how marriage has functioned as a factor of radicalisation or deradicalisation for JI members, depending on their personal and situational circumstances. We suggest that further research is needed to explore the impact of marriage on other aspects of JI's organisational and operational dynamics, such as leadership, decision-making, and network structure.

Marriage as Conceal Strategy for Clandestine Organization

Marriage is a survival strategy within the Jamaah Islamiyyah and Darul Islam clandestine Muslim communities in Malaysia and Indonesia. One of the challenges faced by the members of the Jamaah Islamiyyah (JI) and Darul Islam (DI) movements, which aim to establish an Islamic state in Southeast Asia, is how to maintain their clandestine identity and avoid detection by the authorities. One of the strategies they adopt is to marry within their own network, creating a bond of loyalty and trust among the spouses and their families. Marriage also serves as a means of socialisation and indoctrination for the next generation of militants, who are raised in a strict Islamic environment and exposed to the ideology and activities of the movement. However, marriage within the JI and DI communities is not without its challenges and dilemmas. The spouses have to cope with the risks and uncertainties

⁵¹ Julie Chernov Hwang and Kirsten E. Schulze, "Special Issue on Radical and Militant Islamism in Indonesia," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 0, no. 0 (2023): 1–3, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2023.2296234>.

⁵² Schulze and Liow, "Making Jihadis, Waging Jihad: Transnational and Local Dimensions of the Isis Phenomenon in Indonesia and Malaysia."

⁵³ Schulze and Liow.



of living a double life, such as frequent relocation, separation, imprisonment, or death of their partners. They also have to balance their religious obligations with their personal aspirations and preferences, which may not always align with the norms and expectations of the movement. Moreover, they have to deal with the stigma and discrimination from mainstream society, which often views them as extremists or terrorists.

According to Zainal,⁵⁴ marriage is a complex and dynamic phenomenon influenced by various factors, such as religion, race, gender, culture, and socioeconomic status. She argues that these factors shape the intimate relationships of single Singaporean Malay-Muslim women, who face multiple challenges in finding suitable partners and fulfilling their religious duties. She suggests that these women adopt different strategies to cope with their situation, such as online dating, cross-cultural marriage, or remaining single. Similarly, Jacob⁵⁵ traces the evolution of the DI movement from its origins in the 1920s to its current manifestations in the 21st century. He examines how the movement has adapted to the changing political and social contexts in Indonesia and how it has influenced and been influenced by other Islamist groups in the region. He highlights how the DI movement has used marriage as a tool for recruitment, mobilisation, and survival, as well as how it has faced internal divisions and external pressures over its ideological and operational goals.

Polygamy and serial monogamy are two different types of mating systems that humans may adopt. Polygamy is the practice of having more than one spouse at the same time, while serial monogamy is the practice of having one spouse at a time but changing spouses over the course of one's life. The following table summarises some of the differences between these two systems:

Table 2. The Differences between Polygamy and Serial Monogamy

Aspect	Polygamy	Serial monogamy
Prevalence	Less common, mostly found in traditional societies with high inequality and low female autonomy	More common, mostly found in modern societies with low inequality and high female autonomy
Motivation	Driven by reproductive benefits, such as increasing the number of offspring and securing resources for them	Driven by psychological benefits, such as enhancing romantic attraction, avoiding boredom, and coping

⁵⁴ Humairah Zainal, "Intersectional Identities: Influences of Religion, Race, and Gender on the Intimate Relationships of Single Singaporean Malay-Muslim Women," *Taylor & Francis*, 2018, 351–73, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1080/01494929.2017.1414725>.

⁵⁵ J P Jacob, "From Kartosuwiryo to Sungkar: The Evolution of Indonesia's Darul Islam Movement, 1928-1993," no. September (2020): 1928–93, http://etheses.lse.ac.uk/id/eprint/4298%0Ahttp://etheses.lse.ac.uk/4298/1/Jacob__Kartosuwiryo-Sungkar-evolution-islam-movement.pdf.



		with divorce or death of a spouse
Consequences	May lead to higher fertility, lower paternal investment, higher sexual conflict, and a higher risk of sexually transmitted diseases	May lead to lower fertility, higher paternal investment, lower sexual conflict, and lower risk of sexually transmitted diseases

These differences are supported by various studies that have examined the functional aspects of serial monogamy,⁵⁶ the reproductive success of serial monogamists,⁵⁷ the evolution of marriage institutions,⁵⁸ and the dual human reproductive strategy.⁵⁹ As Baeyens⁶⁰ states, "Serial monogamy may be considered as an adaptive response to changing environmental conditions". Jokela et al. find that "men benefit more than women from having had a high number of spouses".⁶¹ De la Croix and Mariani argue that "the rise of serial monogamy is driven by a long-term increase in women's empowerment".⁶² Fisher suggests that "humans have evolved a dual reproductive strategy: to fall in love and form a pair-bond for rearing their young together, and to feel deep attachment for this partner while they surreptitiously seek novel mates".⁶³

The distinction between Mut'ah marriage in the Shia community and the revolving marriage within the Jamaah Islamiyyah clandestine community is rooted in their respective religious and cultural contexts. Mut'ah, or temporary marriage, is recognised within Shia Islam as a contractual relationship that is fixed for a certain period, allowing both parties to stipulate the duration and conditions of the

⁵⁶ Gert Baeyensi, "Functional Aspects of Serial Monogamy Publisher ' s PDF , Also Known as Version of Record Publication Date : FUNCTIONAL ASPECTS OF SERIAL MONOGAMY : THE MAGPIE PAIR-BOND IN RELATION TO ITS TERRITORIAL SYSTEM," *Ardea* 69, no. 2 (1981): 145–66.

⁵⁷ Markus Jokela et al., "Serial Monogamy Increases Reproductive Success in Men but Not in Women," *Behavioral Ecology* 21, no. 5 (2010): 906–12, <https://doi.org/10.1093/beheco/arg078>.

⁵⁸ David De La Croix and Fabio Mariani, "From Polygyny to Serial Monogamy: A Unified Theory of Marriage Institutions," *Review of Economic Studies* 82, no. 2 (2013): 565–607, <https://doi.org/10.1093/restud/rdv001>.

⁵⁹ Helen E. Fisher, "Serial Monogamy and Clandestine Adultery: Evolution and Consequences of the Dual Human Reproductive Strategy," in *Applied Evolutionary Psychology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 96–111.

⁶⁰ Baeyensi, "Functional Aspects of Serial Monogamy Publisher ' s PDF , Also Known as Version of Record Publication Date : FUNCTIONAL ASPECTS OF SERIAL MONOGAMY : THE MAGPIE PAIR-BOND IN RELATION TO ITS TERRITORIAL SYSTEM."

⁶¹ Jokela et al., "Serial Monogamy Increases Reproductive Success in Men but Not in Women."

⁶² De La Croix and Mariani, "From Polygyny to Serial Monogamy: A Unified Theory of Marriage Institutions."

⁶³ Fisher, "Serial Monogamy and Clandestine Adultery: Evolution and Consequences of the Dual Human Reproductive Strategy."



marriage.⁶⁴ This practice is based on Islamic jurisprudence and is seen as a legitimate form of marriage by those who follow it, with its own set of rules and regulations.⁶⁵

On the other hand, revolving or rotational marriages, as reported within the Jamaah Islamiyyah community, are clandestine and not openly recognised or regulated by Islamic law. These marriages are often secretive, intending to circumvent societal norms and legal restrictions, and they lack the formalities and protections typically associated with recognised forms of marriage.⁶⁶ Mut'ah marriage has been a subject of legal and social discourse, particularly in countries like Indonesia, where the intersection of national law and Islamic law creates a complex legal landscape.⁶⁷ The practice has also been compared to other forms of temporary marriages, such as Misyār, highlighting the diversity of marital practices within the Muslim world.⁶⁸ Critics of Mut'ah marriage often raise concerns about the potential for exploitation and the lack of long-term security for women, comparing it unfavourably to permanent marriage arrangements.⁶⁹ Proponents, however, argue that it provides a legitimate and ethical alternative for individuals seeking companionship within the bounds of Islamic law.⁷⁰

The scholarly discourse on Mut'ah marriage is extensive, with researchers examining its legal status, social implications, and the varying perspectives within the Muslim community.⁷¹ This discourse is further enriched by historical perspectives and contemporary issues surrounding temporary and child marriages in regions like Iran and Afghanistan.⁷² While both Mut'ah and revolving marriages involve temporary arrangements, the key differences lie in their religious sanctioning, societal acceptance, and legal recognition. Mut'ah marriage is a formalised practice within Shia Islam with specific rules and a basis in religious texts, whereas revolving marriages lack such formalisation and are often practised in secrecy without the same

⁶⁴ Mimin Mintarsih and Lukman Mahdami, "The Legal Status of Mut'ah Marriage in Indonesia," *Jurnal Penelitian Hukum De Jure* 21, no. 3 (2021): 397, <https://doi.org/10.30641/dejure.2021.v21.397-408>.

⁶⁵ Faradina Mar'atus Shofia Idrus Umarama, Agus Hamzah, Jamaludin Al Ashari, Arie Widyantoro, "COMPARISON MUT'AH MARRIAGE ACCORDING TO ISLAMIC LAW AND NATIONAL LAW," *JPH: Jurnal Pembaharuan Hukum* 8, no. 3 (2021): 466–84.

⁶⁶ Ali Hasannia and Mostafa Masoudian, "Temporary Marriage Among Shiite and Sunni Muslims: Comparative Study of 'Istimta', Mut'ah, and Misyar," in *Temporary and Child Marriages in Iran and Afghanistan: Historical Perspectives and Contemporary Issues* (Singapore: Department of Anthropology (FRSG) Group, 2021), 1–146, <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-33-4469-3>.

⁶⁷ Muhammad Muhajir and Muhammad Fadli Kamil, "The Views of Contemporer Mut'ah Marriage among Yogyakarta Shi'ite Leaders," *Dialog* 44, no. 2 (2021): 216–29, <https://doi.org/10.47655/dialog.v44i2.478>.

⁶⁸ Ali Hasannia and Mostafa Masoudian, "Temporary Marriage Among Shiite and Sunni Muslims: Comparative Study of 'Istimta', Mut'ah, and Misyar."

⁶⁹ Helen Lindberg, "Mut'ah as Social Contract," in *American Multicultural Studies: Diversity of Race, Ethnicity, Gender and Sexuality* (Singapore: SAGE, 2012), 317.

⁷⁰ Supriad Joni Helandri, Ghazimin Achmad, "Mut ' Ah Marriage in Islamic Perspective," *Indonesian Journal for Islamic Studies* 1, no. 1 (2023): 38–47, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.58723/ijfis.v1i1.28>.

⁷¹ Suryo Ediyono Khresnaya Pertiwi, "Mut" Ah Marriage a Cultural Phenomenon Its Impact in Indonesia," *ICoMS 2016*, 2016, 409.

⁷² Ali Hasannia and Mostafa Masoudian, "Temporary Marriage Among Shiite and Sunni Muslims: Comparative Study of 'Istimta', Mut'ah, and Misyar."



level of religious or legal support. The ongoing debate and research into these practices reflect the dynamic nature of marital norms and the challenges of reconciling traditional practices with modern legal systems.⁷³

The revolving or rotating marriage is a practice of polygamy among some members of the Jamaah Islamiyyah and Darul Islam clandestine Muslim communities in Malaysia and Indonesia. These communities are involved in Islamist insurgencies and terrorism in the region, and they use marriage as a survival strategy for keeping the unity and secrecy of their organisation. The main reason for using this practice is to form kinship and family links that strengthen their loyalty and trust, essential for maintaining their cohesion and commitment. By marrying multiple women who are also members or supporters of the organisation, they create a network of relatives who can provide mutual support, protection, and resources.

Another reason for using this practice is to avoid detection and infiltration by the authorities, who may monitor or target conventional marriages. By having a male member marry multiple women, either simultaneously or consecutively, who may be widows, divorcees, or unmarried and who may have children from previous marriages, they create a complex and dynamic family structure that is difficult to trace or penetrate. The male member may stay with each wife for a short period of time, such as a few days or weeks, before moving on to another wife.⁷⁴ The wives may also move from one location to another to avoid suspicion. According to some sources, a third reason for using this practice is to serve as a reward for the militants who participate in violent operations.⁷⁵ However, such marriage also poses some challenges and risks for the communities, such as the potential for conflict, jealousy, abuse, divorce, and exposure.⁷⁶

Conclusion

Marriage is among the most common and legally recognised forms of social relationships in many cultures. Marriage is a formal bond between two people that usually involves promises of fidelity, legal rights and obligations, and social, economic, and religious aspects. Marriage can have different meanings for each couple and culture. Marriage can be a source of love, happiness, stability, and well-being. Marriage can also be a source of conflict, dissatisfaction, inequality, and poverty. A rotating or changing marriage is an unusual and controversial form of marriage in which couples marry different people in turn or alternately within a certain period of time. This marriage can have various purposes, such as avoiding monogamy, increasing sexual variation, expanding social networks, or sharing family responsibilities. This marriage can also have various impacts, such as

⁷³ Moh Alfin Sulihkhodin, "The Reality of Mut ' Ah Marriage in Indonesia : Reinterpretation of the Opinion of Shia Scholars Muhammad Asadurrohman Aris Wibowo Generally Forbidden It . This Study Used a Qualitative Approach with the Library Study Method . The Writer Chose the Research" 29, no. 2 (2022): 225–43, <https://doi.org/DOI:https://doi.org/10.36667/tajdid.v29i2.710>.

⁷⁴ Karnavian, *Explaining Islamist Insurgencies: The Case of Al-Jamaah Al-Islamiyyah and the Radicalisation of the Poso Conflict, 2000-2007*.

⁷⁵ Hwang and Schulze, "Why They Join: Pathways into Indonesian Jihadist Organizations."

⁷⁶ Chernov Hwang and Schulze, "Special Issue on Radical and Militant Islamism in Indonesia."



increasing individual freedom, reducing social jealousy, enriching life experiences, or lowering relationship quality.

Marriage as a survival strategy to maintain the unity and secrecy of the secret organisation of Jamaah Islamiyyah in Malaysia and Indonesia is one specific example of a rotating or changing marriage. Jamaah Islamiyyah is an Islamic militant organisation that aims to establish an Islamic state in Southeast Asia. The organisation has carried out a series of terrorist attacks in the region since the 1990s and has also been targeted by arrest and surveillance operations by the Malaysian and Indonesian governments. To avoid arrest and disclosure of their identities, Jamaah Islamiyyah implements a system of rotating or changing marriage among its cells, allowing members of the organisation to marry other people from different cells in turn or alternately within a certain period of time. This system also aims to create family ties among members of the organisation, strengthen their unity and loyalty, and hide their traces and activities from the authorities. Marriage as a survival strategy to maintain the unity and secrecy of the secret organisation of Jamaah Islamiyyah in Malaysia and Indonesia is an interesting and challenging phenomenon to study. While this phenomenon combines social, political, religious, and psychological aspects of love, family, community, organisation, and marriage, it also raises ethical, legal, and moral questions about the rights and obligations of individuals and groups in society.

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