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Understanding the Local Wisdom of the Acehnese People in Maintaining Environmental Sustainability: A Social Anthropology Perspective

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Introduction

This essay aims to explore the intricate relationship between the Acehnese people's way of life and environmental balance. The Acehnese territory is divided into three distinct regions: the coastal area, the village area, and the mountainous area. Each region is governed by a system of customary rules designed to uphold harmony among three fundamental aspects: nature, divinity, and humanity. Traditionally, these areas are characterized by a rich body of local knowledge that establishes a cosmological connection to preserve equilibrium among these three essential elements.

Aceh is the westernmost province of Indonesia, renowned for its profound cultural heritage and predominantly Muslim populace, which plays a significant role in shaping the region's social fabric. The influence of Islam is evident in various aspects of Acehnese life, including customs, community practices, and governance. In addition to religious influences, the Acehnese people uphold a robust cultural system that provides essential frameworks for their daily activities and interactions.

Aceh is geographically located at the confluence of the Straits of Malacca and the Indian Ocean. This positioning has historically established it as a vital center for trade and cultural exchange.¹ The province is characterized by the prominent Bukit Barisan

¹Anthony Reid, *Southeast Asia in the Early Modern Era: Trade, Power, and Belief* (Cornell University Press, 1993). Anthony Reid, "An 'Age of Commerce' in Southeast Asian History," *Modern Asian Studies* 24, no. 1 (February 1990): 1–30, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0026749X00001153>.

mountain range, extending north to south through its interior. These mountains contribute significantly to local ecosystems and the economy, giving rise to rivers flowing toward the surrounding seas.² This rich array of waterways supports essential industries such as agriculture and fishing, which are key to the livelihoods of local communities. The unique interplay of geography and culture in Aceh fosters a distinctive environment where tradition and nature coexist harmoniously, reflecting the resilience and adaptability of the Acehnese people throughout their history.

This study investigates three critical aspects of maintaining ecological integrity within specific habitats across three distinct areas, focusing on utilizing local knowledge and wisdom. I will incorporate data collected from various field studies conducted as a social anthropology researcher to enhance the findings. Since 2016, I have been committed to documenting the multifaceted lives of the Acehnese people through my six-volume work, *Acehnology*.³ This extensive publication comprehensively examines their cultural, social, and environmental dimensions from a social anthropology perspective. Despite the rich heritage and practices of the Acehnese, much of their local wisdom regarding environmental sustainability remains underexplored. This study seeks to illuminate these valuable insights and highlight their potential to contribute to ecological preservation initiatives. Key findings will be presented in the Conclusion section, offering useful insights that may inform and enhance local sustainability efforts as well as broader discussions on ecological responsibility.

The Relationship Between Religion and Culture in the Lives of the Acehnese People

In Acehnese culture, the journey of becoming a Muslim is called *tamong*, which translates to “entering.” This process indicates a profound commitment to a belief system—known as *tamong Islam* (conversion to Islam)—that individuals perceive as a lifelong undertaking. *Tamong Islam* begins at birth and continues throughout one’s life. To uphold their commitment to Islam, all rituals observed must align with Islamic teachings, reflecting a dedication to deeper understanding. For the Acehnese, religion is viewed as a fundamental essence or substance continuously explored through the concept of *meununtut euleume*, or seeking knowledge. Engaging in this quest for knowledge is considered vital before one is recognized as *ureung* (human), or, in Arabic, “*insan*.” Attaining the status of *insan* implies a deeper acquaintance with fundamental truths and fosters a meaningful connection with the Almighty Substance, referred to in Islam as Allah.

² William Marsden, *The History of Sumatra: Containing an Account of the Government, Laws, Customs, and Manners of the Native Inhabitants, with a Description of the Natural Productions, and a Relation to the Ancient Political State of That Island* (London: Black Horse Court, 1811).

³ Kamaruzzaman Bustamam-Ahmad, *Acehnology*, vol. 1, 6 vols. (Banda Aceh: Bandar Publishing, 2017).

The Cosmological Framework of the Acehnese

The patterns of human life in Aceh should be interpreted through a religious framework, recognizing that individuals may not always exhibit overt religious observance. Within the context of Islamic practices, rituals performed beyond the mandatory prayers and sunnah acts are regarded as customs. In the Acehnese culture, these are called *sifeut*, which signifies nature. The interplay between religion and customs is described as *lage zat ngon sifeut*, meaning “like substance and nature.” This concept underscores the belief that there is a fundamental connection between religious practices and everyday behavior, as substance and nature are perceived to be intertwined. This perspective encapsulates the Acehnese understanding of their journey toward personal development. As such, traditional rituals serve as a means of enriching customs with religious significance, resulting in practices that reflect both cultural and spiritual dimensions.

In the early generations of Aceh, the populace designated Allah by the appellation *Potala*, a term composed of two syllables: “*Po*” and “*Tala*.” The syllable “*Po*” denotes “Owner,” while “*Tala*” is derived from the Arabic term “*Ta’ala*,” which translates to “Most High.” As such, the Acehnese people perceive all that exists on earth as belonging to the Most High. This conceptualization is encapsulated in the phrase “*ta puwoe bak Potala*,” which conveys the meaning “we return to the Most High Owner.” This worldview engenders a profound sense of interconnectedness, reflecting the commitment of the Acehnese to cultivate relationships among humanity, nature, and the divine. It constitutes a foundational framework that enables the Acehnese to comprehend their place within the cosmos and their connection to the deity they venerate.

To preserve the intricate relationship among humans, nature, and God, the Acehnese adhere to three fundamental principles: remembrance, gratitude, and balance. These principles collectively reflect the cosmological framework of the Acehnese, illustrating that by fostering a strong connection with nature, individuals simultaneously enhance their relationship with the divine. I would like to present the concept in a structured manner. The first layer involves the process of remembering, which cultivates spiritual awareness. This awareness enables individuals to align their lives with the principles that God has expressed throughout the course of the universe. As a result, this understanding enhances one’s knowledge of the natural world, offering insight into the signs and changes observed in their environment. Nature conveys important messages through *haba peuingat* (reminder news), which often serves as a fundamental guide for parents when making decisions in their daily lives.

Haba Peuingat is traditionally expressed through literary forms known as *Hadih Madja*. This practice involves parents reciting *Hadih Madja* during the completion of various tasks. It serves as a significant symbol for Acehnese parents, guiding them to initiate, navigate, and conclude their actions in alignment with the messages they interpret from the universe. This symbolic representation embodies a form of local wisdom that has been successfully preserved for generations. The Acehnese community engages in a range of activities within their gardens, rice fields, forests, mountains, and coastal waters. Each of these activities is governed by established practices that uphold the cosmological relationship between the Acehnese people and their environment.

Additionally, *Haba Peuingat* is recognized as a symbol of gratitude and is expressed through various ritual processes and *kenduri* events.

The Foundation of Social Ethics

In Acehese culture, the concept of *haba peuingat*, which translates to remembrance, is intricately linked to the expression of gratitude, primarily demonstrated through the tradition of *kenduri*. This communal feast is observed during significant life milestones. For example, *kenduri* is typically conducted seven months into a pregnancy and continues until 1,000 days following a person's death. In certain Acehese communities, *kenduri* may also take place at gravesites prior to Ramadan as a means of honoring and remembering deceased villagers, while simultaneously praying for the acceptance of their souls by God. This practice serves as a profound symbol of gratitude and reverence toward the divine.

Moreover, *kenduri* events are commonly held for individuals embarking on activities such as fishing, farming, and forest foraging. Distinct types of *kenduri*—*kenduri laot* (ocean), *kenduri sawah* (rice fields), and *kenduri* at the forest's edge—mark the commencement of these endeavors.⁴ Each event is scheduled based on the lunar calendar and occurs only once. Upon determining a suitable time and location, the community unites to celebrate with a feast, reflecting their gratitude and reverence for the sustenance they seek in their activities. The *kenduri*, which were initially established to strengthen the cosmological relationships among the Acehese people, nature, and the divine, have evolved into a significant form of local knowledge often recognized as local wisdom. Within the Acehese community, this concept is referred to as *reusam*, meaning custom. Parents convey these teachings through various behaviors and traditions. For instance, they impart guidance on practices such as sustainable tree cutting, ethical engagement with the wilderness, harmonious coexistence with animals, and maintaining the cleanliness of rivers.

These unwritten rules have developed into social ethics that have been preserved for generations. Moreover, to cultivate interpersonal relationships, these guidelines create shared social memories. A pertinent example is observed during a *kenduri* of death, where community members voluntarily collaborate to prepare cakes and snacks. Such activities are undertaken collectively, emphasizing a spirit of cooperation rather than individual gain. Consequently, this fosters harmony within the community and supports the collective maintenance of their social ethics. The social ethic of the Acehese community plays a vital role in fostering a sense of unity, encapsulated in the concept of *kaum*. This term signifies much more than mere association; it reflects the establishment of social relationships grounded in a profound and enduring bond of brotherhood. The Acehese regard these relationships as integral to their identities, embodying deep-seated values essential to their communal life.

⁴ Zubir and Kamaruzzaman Bustamam Ahmad, "The Dialectics of Islam and Custom in the *Kenduri La'ot* Tradition of the Coastal Muslim Community of East Aceh," *Peuradeun* 10, no. 3 (2022): 899–922.

This social ethic acts as a foundational principle for integrating cosmological messages that have enriched the cultural and religious tapestry of the Acehnese people. These messages derive from a rich historical context, creating a unique amalgamation of spirituality that underscores their way of life. Consequently, the process of nurturing consciousness among the Acehnese is deliberate and profound, highlighting their strong religious convictions and unwavering commitment to cultural values. These values are intricately woven into the fabric of their society and are methodically passed down through generations. This intergenerational transmission not only reinforces communal bonds but also preserves the rich traditions and beliefs that define the Acehnese way of life, ensuring their vibrant identity endures across time.

From Harmony to Balancing of Human Life toward the Environment

The concept of harmony is fundamental in fostering balance, which is referred to as *timang* in Acehnese. *Timang* serves as a critical standard for respecting the environment and emphasizes the importance of equilibrium in our endeavors. The inquiry of whether a situation is balanced (*pu ka timang?*) is a constant consideration, indicating that all aspects of work—planning, execution, and outcomes—must be in harmony. Neglecting any part of the process results in an unbalanced state (*hana timang*) and ultimately leads to less than optimal results. Furthermore, the notion of *timang* is encapsulated in the term *peutimang*, which signifies the efforts to achieve balance. This concept is integral to the operations of the Acehnese community, both in private and public contexts. Leadership in this context is embodied by the term *peutimang*, while *peutimang nanggroë* refers to the collective efforts aimed at establishing balance within a nation. In social interactions, the principles of *peutimang* must serve as a strong foundation for decision-making across all levels, including within the household.

The foundational concept within Acehnese society concerning the maintenance of relationships with individuals, the environment, and the divine has been articulated in previous discussions. This concept gives rise to a deeply rooted tradition that intricately binds the lives of the Acehnese people to their religious beliefs and cultural practices. A vital aspect of this relationship is the manner in which religion interweaves with culture, facilitating a perspective in which cultural expressions are regarded as reflections of religious values. This interplay creates a distinctive societal framework in which spirituality and cultural identity are inextricably linked. Furthermore, the Acehnese language conveys a profound relationship between substance and nature (*lage zat ngon sifeut*), emphasizing the interconnectedness of these elements within their worldview. This relationship highlights the significance of respecting both the natural environment and the spiritual realm, thereby illustrating how the Acehnese people strive to navigate their existence in harmony with the divine and the world around them.

The values inherent in the religious and cultural relationships of the Acehnese people can be regarded as a sophisticated social management system, especially when analyzed through the lens of their socio-cultural history. At the center of this system is the role of the king, a position that carries significant responsibilities concerning both humanity and the overall governance of the kingdom. To effectively fulfill these responsibilities, it is imperative for a king to possess a wide-ranging knowledge base that encompasses humanitarian concerns, the natural environment, and spiritual matters. This knowledge is fundamental for understanding how to maintain a harmonious relationship with the universe—a concept that is not only philosophical but also deeply practical within the Acehnese context. Mastery of cosmology, the study of the cosmos and its governing principles, is essential for effective leadership.

Armed with this understanding, the king is equipped to discern both the visible and invisible forces that shape the world around him. Such insights are vital for comprehending the natural cycles and rhythms that influence the wellbeing of his people. This capability extends to various practical applications; for instance, the selection of sites for new buildings is guided by cosmological principles to ensure alignment with natural energies. Furthermore, the timing of agricultural activities, such as the planting of rice, is determined by astrological signs and seasonal cycles, maximizing the potential for successful harvests. Strategic decisions regarding the locations of ports are based on cardinal directions, enhancing trade and travel opportunities, which contribute to the kingdom's economic and social stability.

The Reproduction of Local Knowledge

In matters of defense, the king must utilize his insights to identify optimal locations for fortifications, ensuring the community's security against potential threats. This level of foresight is crucial for safeguarding the realm. Additionally, the king's knowledge extends to the management of wildlife in proximity to the palace, with a particular focus on large animals like elephants, which can serve both practical and ceremonial purposes. In summary, the king's ability to integrate cosmological knowledge with practical governance exemplifies the significance of a balanced relationship with both the natural world and the cosmos. This understanding not only reinforces the king's authority but also serves the interests of the community, ensuring the continued prosperity and stability of the Acehnese people.⁵

In the realm of religious affairs, clerics hold a vital position within Acehnese society, functioning not only as advisors to the king but also as authoritative figures on religious practices among the Acehnese people. Their influence is significant, as they serve as intermediaries who guide the spiritual direction of the community. The cultural landscape of Aceh is deeply interwoven with religious significance, reflecting the profound relationship between faith and daily life. This connection is particularly evident in *kenduri* ceremonies—essential gatherings that commemorate important life events. These ceremonies often integrate religious elements, where clerics lead prayers and offer blessings, further enriching the cultural experience with spiritual depth.

⁵ Amirul Hadi, *Islam and State in Sumatra: A Study of Seventeenth-Century Aceh* (Leiden: Brill, 2003).

Clerics are regularly present at *kenduri*, whether they celebrate the arrival of a new life or honor those who have passed. Their role is essential in leading prayers and invoking blessings, ensuring that each gathering is imbued with religious importance. This involvement affirms the integral relationship between cultural practices and spiritual beliefs in the Acehnese community, highlighting the clerics' essential contribution to maintaining these traditions.

The regulation of daily habits within society, which aims to maintain a harmonious balance among individuals, their environment, and the divine, is referred to as *reusam*. This complex system is founded on the collaboration between those in positions of authority and the *ulama*, or scholars, who oversee the effective implementation and adherence to these customs throughout the community. Each community is directed by a village leader, known as the *keuchik*, who plays a critical role in upholding the values and practices associated with *reusam*. In addition to individual villages, a *mukim* supervises multiple villages, providing a broader governance framework and enhancing cultural cohesion. This hierarchical structure facilitates the dissemination of essential astronomical knowledge that is vital for community planning and activities.

An integral component of *reusam* is the reliance on astronomical phenomena for the scheduling of various activities. The Acehnese people observe the stars and the moon to determine the most appropriate times for initiating community endeavors, ensuring that actions are in harmony with the natural rhythms of the environment. This practice is fundamental to a natural calendar, which supports seasonal observances and cultivates a deep respect for the natural world and its cyclical processes. The traditional calendar serves as a critical instrument, offering guidance on optimal timings for agricultural activities, celebrations, and rituals. Such careful observation of celestial bodies prevents conflicts between scheduled activities and the seasonal cycles, thereby safeguarding the community's agricultural practices and cultural customs.⁶

Central to this system is the *kenduri* ritual, a communal feast that serves to reestablish balance and express gratitude. These gatherings reinforce social ties and ensure that the community remains connected to its traditions and environmental context. Through the *reusam* system, the Acehnese people have cultivated a profound connection with their surroundings. This relationship is integral to their cosmological perspective, which emphasizes respect for nature and the interdependence of all life forms. Even prior to the advent of modernization, the Acehnese people's bond with their environment and their adherence to traditional practices were essential elements of their identity and societal structure.

The three systems outlined herein reflect the local knowledge deeply embedded within Acehnese society. The framework of governance, known as *Adat*, establishes the foundational rules for societal organization.⁷ Concurrently, religious guidelines are classified under the term "law," which encapsulated the moral and ethical standards

⁶ Hasna Tuddar Putri and Ibnu Qodir, "Aceh Local Wisdom in the Method of Determining the Hijri Calender," *Al-Hilal: Journal of Islamic Astronomy* 4, no. 1 (2022): 1–16.

⁷ Takeshi Ito, *The World of the Adat Aceh: A Historical Study of the Sultanate of Aceh* (Canberra: ANU, 1984).

governing individual behavior within the community. Additionally, organized customary rules, referred to as *reusam*, play a vital role in regulating social interactions and community relationships.⁸ For centuries, these systems had coexisted harmoniously, facilitating a balanced lifestyle for the Acehnese people, until the incursion of Dutch colonial powers initiated profound disruptions from 1873 until 1942.

The conflict between the Acehnese kingdom and Dutch colonial forces, especially during the war, resulted in significant destruction, including the dismantling of the kingdom's central governance. In this context of turmoil, authority and power were effectively transferred to the '*ulama*, the esteemed religious scholars and leaders.⁹ This marked a significant transition in governance, as the '*ulama* began to hold dual forms of authority encompassing both political and religious leadership after the Aceh-Dutch war.¹⁰ However, this established cosmological order encountered further complications when the renowned Dutch anthropologist Christian Snouck Hurgronje posited that the ultimate authority within Acehnese communities resided with the *keuchik* (village head) and *mukim* (district head).¹¹ Hurgronje's perspective marginalized the '*ulama*, depicting them as a group to be diminished or even eliminated due to their role as leaders of resistance against colonial domination. This viewpoint led to a substantial disruption in the traditional equilibrium of power and authority within Acehnese society, resulting in ambiguity and tension regarding governance and obedience.

The sociological ramifications of this disruption were significant. Community members found themselves compelled to yield to the authority of the '*ulama*, who had ascended as pivotal figures of religious leadership. Simultaneously, there remained obligations to comply with the directives of the *keuchik* or *mukim*. This duality created complexities and contradictions within the relationships of authority. Consequently, the previously harmonious dynamics of power and governance became obscured, leading to a fragmented social fabric within Acehnese society.¹²

The Acehnese people demonstrate a profound understanding that intricately links them to the universe, influencing their perception of nature, which is a fundamental aspect of their cultural identity. A particularly noteworthy area of exploration is the interplay between religion and environmental stewardship within this community. The marine environment is indispensable for the Acehnese, providing a primary source of livelihood. Consequently, preserving marine ecosystems and safeguarding their habitats is paramount. This commitment to sustainability has fostered the development of specific customs and practices aimed at ensuring the conservation of marine life. For

⁸ M. Masyhur Amin, *Kedudukan Kelompok Elite Aceh Dalam Perspektif Sejarah* (Banda Aceh: Unsyiah, 1981).

⁹ Anthony Reid, *The Blood of the People: Revolution and the End of Traditional Rule in Northern Sumatra* (NUS Press, 2014).

¹⁰ Ibrahim Alfian, *Perang Di Jalan Allah: Perang Aceh 1873-1912* (Jakarta: Pustaka Sinar Harapan, 1987).

¹¹ Christian Snouck Hurgronje, *The Acehnese* (Leiden: Brill, 1906).

¹² See for example, R. Michael Feener, *Shari'a and Social Engineering: The Implementation of Islamic Law in Contemporary Aceh, Indonesia* (Oxford: OUP Oxford, 2013). R. Michael Feener, "Social Engineering through Shari'a: Islamic Law and State-Directed Da'wa in Contemporary Aceh," *Islamic Law and Society* 19, no. 3 (January 1, 2012): 275–311, <https://doi.org/10.1163/156851911X612581>.

instance, the use of explosives for fishing is strictly prohibited due to the detrimental impact such practices have on fish populations and the overall balance of marine ecosystems. Furthermore, fishermen are discouraged from damaging coral reefs during fishing activities, given their critical role in supporting marine biodiversity. The community also forbids the use of ‘tiger trawls,’ which are known for their indiscriminate capture of fish, including juvenile populations. Such practices endanger the long-term sustainability of fish stocks. Additionally, Fridays are designated as sacred days in which fishing is not permitted, reflecting the community’s deep respect for the sea and its resources.¹³

The Social System of Acehnese Society

In parallel, the forest areas that the Acehnese rely upon for various necessities are protected by customs, known as Forest Customs, which govern how individuals interact with their natural surroundings. Visitors entering the forest are expected to acknowledge the forest dwellers, symbolizing mutual respect and an understanding of the spiritual entities believed to inhabit these natural spaces. Moreover, regulations concerning timber harvesting are strictly enforced; trees that attain a certain size are designated as protected and cannot be felled. This measure is essential for maintaining the ecological integrity of the forest. Additionally, agricultural activities are permitted only in proximity to community settlements in order to minimize resource depletion and environmental disturbance. Areas situated farther from these settlements are intentionally preserved to retain rainwater, which is vital for sustaining both the ecosystem and the community. Any activity involving the utilization of forest resources is accompanied by prescribed rituals that underscore the spiritual connection the Acehnese maintain with their environment. These customs are not merely regulatory guidelines; they represent a broader cultural framework that highlights the importance of environmental conservation. Ultimately, the forests are indispensable resources that support the community’s survival and play a critical role in their holistic way of life.¹⁴

In the process of constructing settlements, it is imperative to adhere to the directions of the cardinal points as well as the orientation of the Qibla, which is the direction Muslims face during prayer. The individuals residing in southern regions are referred to as Southerners, or, in the Acehnese language, *ureung tumong*, signifying “people from the South.” This group is classified as “highland people,” originating from mountainous areas. Over time, they have engaged with those inhabiting coastal regions, known as *ureung baroh*, or “Northern people,” who are described as “lowlanders.” Settlements are generally established in proximity to river routes, as it is believed that such locations enhance blessings in their daily lives and provide consistent access to

¹³Kamaruzzaman Bustamam Ahmad, “A Study of Panglima La’ot: An ‘Adat Institution in Aceh,” *Al-Jami’ah: Journal of Islamic Studies* 55, no. 1 (2017): 155–88. Crispen Wilson and Matthew Linkie, “The Panglima Laot of Aceh: A Case Study in Large-Scale Community-Based Marine Management after the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami,” *Oryx* 46, no. 4 (October 2012): 495–500, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0030605312000191>.

¹⁴Sulaiman and Esmi Warassih, “Recognition of Adat Forest and Plantation Concessions in Indonesia,” *Kanun: Jurnal Ilmu Hukum* 19, no. 2 (2017): 249–68.

water resources. The residential structures are typically oriented towards the Qibla, facilitating easy identification of the direction for the performance of the five daily prayers. This alignment is not only practical but also holds significant spiritual importance for the community members.

The average height of these residential structures is approximately two meters, which creates a shaded communal space underneath, fostering camaraderie among neighbors. This area serves as a gathering point for social interactions and community activities, thereby reinforcing social bonds. Each house usually incorporates a well located in front, which provides convenient access to water for both household and communal purposes. The beach is generally situated to the right of the residence, contributing to the aesthetic appeal and enhancing the community's connection with its natural surroundings. Typically, a water bowl is positioned at the foot of the stairs leading to the house. This bowl serves a dual function: it allows residents and visitors to wash their feet prior to entering the residence and provides a means for performing ablutions, which is a critical ritual before prayer.

Wells serve as communal resources, accessible to all individuals in need of water. However, toilets are deliberately constructed at a considerable distance from the main living area to mitigate any potential odors and ensure the surrounding air quality remains pleasant. In Acehnese rural culture, it is uncommon to construct toilets within the confines of the home. This practice is based on the belief that the presence of a toilet inside the residence may attract negative energy, thus disrupting the harmonious atmosphere that the inhabitants seek to maintain. These cultural practices reflect a profound respect for the living environment and an enduring commitment to promoting health and well-being within their communities.

To facilitate connections between the communities in the South and North, a meticulously designed public space has been established for the Acehnese population, strategically located adjacent to the river. Historically, bends and estuaries of rivers that flow into the sea have given rise to small towns, or sub-districts, which serve as critical nodes for local trade and community interaction. This particular area encompasses three essential public spaces: mosques, markets, and traditional Islamic boarding schools (*dayah*). The markets are strategically positioned near the mosques, creating a focal point for trading activities that allows local vendors to engage with community members and exchange goods effectively. Proximity to the mosque facilitates communal worship, thereby strengthening the spiritual fabric of the community.

In addition, the traditional Islamic boarding schools play a vital role in the educational and cultural development of the Acehnese people. These institutions provide not only academic instruction but also impart moral and Islamic teachings to the youth. The close geographic arrangement of these amenities—surrounded by fertile rice fields and flowing rivers—enables the community to integrate trading, worship, and educational activities seamlessly and efficiently. This configuration exemplifies what has been commonly referred to as the “golden triangle” route within Acehnese culture, representing a fundamental principle known as *hareukat*, which translates to “to move” in Arabic. This concept emphasizes the significance of mobility and economic engagement within the community. Simultaneously, individuals participating in the

selling of goods are identified as *meukat*, a term derived from the Arabic *miqat*, meaning “stop for a moment,” which reflects the temporal nature of trade activities. Those pursuing studies at the Islamic boarding schools are recognized as engaging in trade, or *jak meudagang*, demonstrating the intertwined relationship between education and commerce.

The activities within this vibrant area typically occur along the gently curved edges of the roadway, which are adapted to the surrounding natural landscape. Fishermen efficiently transport their fresh catch to the market, utilizing the river’s proximity to streamline the distribution process. Agricultural produce from adjacent fields and livestock from local farms are similarly conveyed with ease, ensuring that the market remains well-supplied with a diverse array of goods. This arrangement not only facilitates accessibility for sellers but also promotes interaction between buyers from both the northern and southern regions, thereby enhancing the community’s collaborative and interdependent nature.

Conclusion

The existence of the Acehnese people is intricately linked to the pursuit of equilibrium among three fundamental elements: God, humanity, and the universe. This complex relationship serves as a framework that shapes their cultural identity and worldview, emphasizing the significant role that religion and cultural practices play in determining how the Acehnese perceive themselves and engage with their environment. In Aceh, both the natural world and the divine are of utmost importance. The Acehnese community adheres to a series of rituals and unwritten rules that govern behavior and promote respect for the land and its spiritual significance. Individuals residing in Aceh are expected to honor these traditions and the principles that have sustained the community for generations.

These binding regulations are steeped in the values of remembrance, gratitude, and the intention to maintain balance in relationships with God, fellow human beings, and the natural environment. Consequently, all Acehnese rituals, particularly those practiced within traditional society, serve as a fundamental expression of culture. They are closely tied to the Acehnese way of thinking, symbolic language, and social organization. This dynamic interplay underscores a collective obligation to preserve nature and ensure that actions reflect a spirit of appreciation, mindfulness, and harmony. The symbols utilized in rituals act as guiding principles, directing the community’s decisions and existence in a manner that honors and maintains the equilibrium among these three interconnected realms. This intricate relationship between the sacred and the quotidian fosters a rich cultural heritage that remains integral to the identity of the Acehnese people.

This study emphasizes the crucial role of local knowledge and wisdom within traditional societies in fostering environmental sustainability. In light of increasing concerns regarding ecological preservation, the significance of maintaining traditional practices has become increasingly evident in contemporary discourse. However, the

forces of modernization often introduce conflicts between these established local traditions and the interests driven by modern capitalism, which frequently prioritize immediate profits over long-term ecological stability. It is imperative for all relevant stakeholders—including governmental bodies, non-governmental organizations, and community members—to prioritize efforts aimed at safeguarding and promoting this invaluable local knowledge and wisdom. Such efforts are essential not only for the preservation of biodiversity but also for the well-being of future generations.

The Acehnese people, who have adhered to their distinct ecological philosophies for centuries, now face significant challenges. The region of Aceh has attracted considerable attention from various national and international companies seeking to capitalize on its natural resources. This surge in commercial interest poses a threat to the very traditions and lifestyles that the Acehnese cherish, resulting in a reality that many within the community had not anticipated. The ongoing struggle to reconcile development with cultural and environmental preservation is of paramount importance in this context.

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