

The *Pula Batèe* Ritual on Death Ceremonies in Lam Ilie Teungoh Society Indrapuri District-Aceh Besar

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Abstract

The pula batèe ritual which has taken root in society is one of the traditions in death ceremonies. This research was conducted in Lam Ilie Teungoh village, Indrapuri District, Aceh Besar. The aim of this research is to determine the process of carrying out the pula batèe ritual, the symbolic meaning contained in the pula batèe ritual, as well as the teungku's response to the pula batèe ritual. This research uses qualitative methods with data collection instruments in the form of observation, interviews, and documentation. The data were analyzed by means of data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. The findings show that the pula batèe rituals are carried out by the teungku imum by reading prayers that bring goodness to the corpse. The pula batèe ritual is performed on the seventh day after death. The meaning is that the stone used can always glorify the corpse and the jarak tree (bak nawah) used can shed away sins and the coconut leaves are used so that the corpse will always be in the ranks of the faithful. Teungku's views of the pula batèe ritual at death ceremonies are positive because the pula batèe ritual does not conflict with Islam and in practice contains religious values and generates solidarity between people in society.

Keywords: Ritual, Pula Batèe, Death, Society

Ritual Pula Batèe Pada Upacara Kematian Masyarakat Lam Ilie Teungoh Kabupaten Indrapuri-Aceh Besar

Abstrak

Ritual *pula batèe* yang sudah mengakar di masyarakat merupakan salah satu tradisi dalam upacara kematian. Penelitian ini dilakukan di Desa Lam Ilie Teungoh, Kecamatan Indrapuri, Aceh Besar. Tujuan penelitian ini adalah untuk mengetahui proses pelaksanaan ritual *pula batèe*, makna simbolik yang terkandung dalam ritual *pula batèe*, serta tanggapan teungku terhadap ritual *pula batèe*. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan instrumen pengumpulan data berupa observasi, wawancara, dan dokumentasi. Analisis data dilakukan dengan cara reduksi data, penyajian data, dan penarikan simpulan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa ritual *pula batèe* dilakukan oleh teungku imum dengan cara membaca doa-doa yang mendatangkan kebaikan bagi jenazah. Ritual *pula batèe* dilakukan pada hari ketujuh setelah kematian. Maknanya adalah batu yang digunakan dapat senantiasa memuliakan jenazah dan pohon jarak (*bak nawah*) yang digunakan dapat meluruhkan dosa serta daun kelapa digunakan agar jenazah senantiasa berada dalam jajaran orang-orang yang beriman. Pandangan Teungku terhadap ritual *pula batèe* pada upacara kematian adalah positif karena ritual *pula batèe* tidak bertentangan dengan Islam dan dalam praktiknya mengandung nilai-nilai agama dan menimbulkan rasa solidaritas antar manusia dalam masyarakat.

Kata Kunci: Ritual, Pula Batèe, Kematian, Masyarakat

Introduction

Aceh is a province that has abundant with various customs and cultures. In the

last five centuries, Aceh has been one of the central regions of world civilization under

the rule of the Aceh Darussalam Kingdom. Various centers of knowledge, customs, and culture can be felt significantly. Acehese customs and cultures always originate from the values of Islamic teachings (Soelaiman, 2011). This has been implemented since a long time ago when Aceh had four very well-known great Ulama, namely Hamzah Fansuri, Syamsuddin As-Sumatrani, Nuruddin Ar-Raniry, and Sheikh Abdurrauf As-Singkily. Many people from all over the world studied with these four scholars. This had an impact on aligning customs with Islamic patterns, thus forming various customs that were based on Islam and could not be separated from the routines of the Acehese.

Every value implied in Islamic teachings always function as a control and restraint over customs which sometimes contradict with the *qanun*, *resam*, or Islamic teachings (Ibrahim, 1986). Customs can be said to be one of the things that can define the Acehese more deeply, and have various values (Manan, 2020; Manan & Munir, 2016). Customs themselves have existed for a long time and have been preserved from one generation to the next or are usually called inheritance, so they have a strong relationship with the community habits (Abbas, 2004). The Acehese believe that customs and laws are like substances with properties that cannot be separated.

This habit continues to be carried out by the Acehese, one of which is the death ceremonies. Death is the promise of Allah SWT for all living creatures who must experience it (Qur'an, 1997). The Acehese believe that death is a very sacred thing, therefore if someone dies several stages must be passed, namely the corpse must be washed, shrouded, prayed for, and buried. Then several other rituals such as *dom jeurat* and *pula batèe* are carried out after the funeral process has been completed. Death ceremony customs are traditions created by humans to let go of someone who has died (Manan & Arifin, 2019).

Death ceremonies in the Acehese society in general have created a family atmosphere in the community, so there are several benefits in the process of the death ceremony, including the creation of high solidarity between fellow communities (Manan & Ria, 2017). Death ceremonies are important in the social life of the community, the importance and the value of these ceremonies are based on belief traditions. The connection does not mean the end of a person's participation in the life and activities of his family, but death is understood as a process of tradition or a person's transfer to another world (Tarigan, 2003).

Pula batèe ritual process must be carried out on every grave of a deceased person by the family. In this *pula batèe* process, two stones are usually used to mark the head and feet. The purpose of placing a stone on a grave is to permanently mark the grave so that it is easy to recognize and easy to visit in the future. It is said that the placement of objects such as tombstones, boards, and so on is not contrary to Islamic law. Even Rasulullah SAW himself marked the grave of his brother, Uthman Bin Mazh'un by placing a large stone over his grave. He explained that it is the custom of the Acehese that when someone dies, they are required to undergo several rituals. Before being buried, the corpse must first receive *adzan* (the call for prayer) either from the family or represented by a religious figure in the village. The purpose of *adzan* is that it has become an obligation for the Acehese, especially since the corpse was born in Islam. It has become a literal thing for the people of Lam Ilie Teungoh village to receive the *adzan* before the body is buried because every Muslim who is born into the world must receive the *adzan* and when they die, they also end with *adzan*. It is said that reciting the *adzan* when a person dies is a *sunnah*, after that the corpse was buried.

In the Acehese society, the laying of gravestones (*pula batèe*) as grave markers

varies in terms of the time of implementation, such as on the 1st, 7th, 14th, 21st, and 44th days. The Acehnese truly believed that these days are sacred. Meanwhile, the temporary replacement for tombstones as grave markers for the Indrapuri community is the *jarak* tree (*bak nawah*). The reason for choosing this tree is that it is easy to live even in dry land. In addition, it does not need care when left for a long time. Then a small mound is made on the grave that is slightly higher than the ground so that people know that it is a grave and will not step on it, then the mound was covered with coconut leaves. The researchers are interested in carrying a further research entitled "Pula Batèe Ritual on Death Ceremonies in Lam Ilie Teungoh society, Indrapuri District, Aceh Besar".

This qualitative research describes the actual situation where the researcher is the key instrument (Anggito & Setiawan, 2018). The main sources for this research are actions and words as well as sources in the form of documents (Moleong, 2007). Primary data sources were obtained from the first source, both individuals and perpetrators who were directly involved in this ritual. Secondary data sources were obtained from pre-existing sources, such as the profile and history of the village. The data collection technique involves reviewing and directly observing the objects being studied at the research location, in-depth interviews using question-answer methods, and direct face-to-face meetings between researchers and informants. The informants chosen are people who understand well the topic of discussion, such as *teungku imum*, religious leaders, traditional leaders, community leaders, *fardhu kifayah* members, and the families of the deceased and documentation containing supporting evidence in the form of books, journals related to research discussion to complement the data that have been obtained through observations and interviews (Manan, 2013, 2021). Data

analysis follows the Miles et.al model; data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions (Miles et al., 2018). The analysis process is interactive, going back and forth between reductions, presentation, and drawing conclusion activities during the research period. Conclusions can then be drawn based on the research results presented in narrative form.

Rituals

Rituals are part of a series of religious events that have been determined according to the core structure of the social identity of the community (Eliade, 1957; Manan, 2018). Rituals are often equated with religious ceremonies such as *zikr*, *salat* etc (Manan et al., 2023). It is an act of respect for God, the Creator, ancestors, and spirits so it is carried out in a grand manner because this action is an action that is considered sacred and solemn. Rituals are often associated with religious celebration ceremonies, namely death, marriage, childbirth, and other rites which are carried out exclusively (Agus, 2006). It is a form of tradition and custom in society, rituals carried out continuously, either every day or sometimes seasonally. Religious ceremonies usually consist of several stages that combine actions such as praying together, serving food, eating together, fasting, and other actions (Rumahuru, 2018).

Ritual is a form of communication about the intensity of values, norms and family relationships and a form of expression of a desire or a reality expressed in symbolic form. In other words, the ritual shows other truths that can appear directly (Manan, 2015a, 2015b). Rituals always teach people how to behave, especially in terms of solidarity, because each individual needs a sense of dependence and resilience that can be obtained from being part of a social group of society. There are two main types of rituals, Calendar-based rituals and life-cycle rituals. Calendar-based rituals must follow a predetermined schedule and may not be

carried out at any other time. Meanwhile, life-cycle rituals are carried out when a need or necessity arises (Manan, 2013).

Bell argued that ritual refers to a strategy or other way of acting in everyday life. This way of acting is born through human construction when dealing with a problem. Rituals as practices are socially constructed, having the function of social control amidst changing conceptions. Rituals are practices or actions that regulate human behavior (Bell, 2009). Bell also said that the action of ritualization has characteristics and uniqueness that differentiate it from other actions. According to Bell, there are six characteristics of ritual, namely: First, ritual activities are formal, in terms of expression, speech, gesture, and behavior, all of which are related to social hierarchy. Second, it is traditional, this is closely related to tradition or culture which is carried out repeatedly. Third, the quality of these rituals varies. Fourth, rules are highly emphasized to avoid deviations. Fifth, the symbol of purity is not found in the object itself, but in the way of expressing values and attitudes towards the object. Sixth, a performance, ritual is a symbolic action that is consciously carried out in front of the public (Bell, 2009). This aims to convey messages in the form of visuals, sounds, and smells so that those who see the ritual are convinced and can accept the truth of the action through sacred symbols.

Many underlying causes lead people to perform a ritual. There are many ways of acting and many kinds of situations that encourage people to ritualize. Different spaces and cultures certainly have an impact on different methods. This has something to do with previous generations who have passed on traditions to the next generation. Every society basically has ritual traditions that are different from each other which highlight their unique characteristics. Rituals function to integrate these traditions within a society. Rituals are also the most effective method for making decisions in the

form of actions in a particular culture. Rituals are not static but dynamic over time. The context of the rite is more varied, such as cultural or traditional context, spatial and temporal context, social context, and historical context. Ritual as a phenomenon is both unique and universal. The meaning of ritual cannot be understood from just one point of view, because ritual has a variety of conceptions and dimensions.

Turner explained that a rite means a necessity that a person undertakes by carrying out a series of activities that refer to a process with a certain character structure to be accepted in a situation or context of life that has never been experienced before. At that time an individual or group of people must undergo a ritual. They are regulated by the provisions, traditions, orders, and ceremonies that apply during the implementation of the case (Turner & Turner, 1978). Rituals carried out by society are religious beliefs and can accompany people to carry out and obey all forms of social order. Ordinary people who carry out rituals can pass on inspiration and values at a very deep level to the next generation. Therefore, rituals have a position amid society, namely: overcoming and eliminating conflicts, overcoming disputes that occur in society, arousing sympathy, uniting principles amidst differences, and providing new strength and motivation to continue to have a social feeling in everyday life (Turner, 1969). Turner has polarized rituals into two components, namely life crisis rites which are carried out to accompany life crises felt by humans. This rite covers marriage, the birth of a baby, and death (Winangun, 1990). Rituals that have become embedded in society are a reflection of the society itself because rituals are a form of action that is legal and concrete and has something to do with the symbolic. These are symbols that aim to interpret a behavior or action (Ulya, 2013).

Even though these symbols are smaller, they also have an important role and

can influence social systems and their meaning must be inherited from the main background in which these symbols occur (Turner & Turner, 1978). Koentjaraningrat in his work says that ritual ceremonies are actions that are under the control of customs and laws that apply in a society which are correlated with various kinds of events that occur in the society concerned. Rituals are closely related to supernatural beliefs that have certain aims and objectives. Rituals are carried out to obtain a blessing (Koentjaraningrat, 1990). Rituals can be marked by several components, namely, the time and place of the ceremony, the ceremonial equipment, and the people involved in the process of carrying out the ceremony. In conclusion, ritual is a communication. It communicates something to its followers although they sometimes do not understand what the rituals communicate are.

Result and Discussion

Process of Pula Batèe Ritual on Death Ceremonies

In the process of *pula batèe* ritual, several objects or plants that need to be prepared by the corpse's family, namely, tombstones (*batèe jeurat*), *jarak* trees (*bak nawah*), coconut leaves (*oen u*) that are still intact and still green, and water that has been mixed with fragrances from various kinds of flowers as a compliment. The *pula batèe* ritual in Lam Ilie Teungoh society varies, but the majority of people choose on the seventh day after death because it is believed that the corpse is still returning home to visit his relatives (Manan, 2014) before the soul of the corpse is lifted into the sky. On this day a big feast is also held and invites all relatives and the entire village community. Following the tradition in Aceh, the family slaughters a cow or goat to enjoy together. Regarding the *pula batèe* ritual on the seventh day after death, previously the family must have coordinated with *teungku*

imum for the implementation of the *pula batèe* ritual on the seventh day.

The *pula batèe* ritual is usually carried out in the morning from 10:00 to 12:00 PM. On the seventh day, the family must bring glutinous rice to eat together after the *pula batèe* ritual is carried out. Glutinous rice has become a typical food for the Acehnese. It is usually served with roasted grated coconut mixed with brown sugar, coconut milk, *srikaya*, and various other cakes. Apart from the main meal, the family must also provide coffee, tea, and mineral water. In the evening the family invited the entire village community, especially men, to read the *shamadiah* led by *teungku imum* at the funeral home.

Symbolic Meanings in the Pula Batèe Ritual

Every ritual certainly contains its own symbolic meaning in the tradition, as is the case with the implementation of the *pula batèe* ritual on certain days after death which use several plant elements and which are believed to contain sacredness. The use of plants or objects is a form of offering for people who have died. The Lam Ilie Teungoh people believe that the plants or objects used can reduce the level of torment of the deceased. Apart from that, after completing the *pula batèe* ritual, the people who attend the ritual offer prayers with the intention that the prayers will be sent to the corpse so that it would receive blessings and light in the grave.

The symbolic meaning of the use of several plant elements and objects in the *pula batèe* ritual process includes: the tombstones in the *pula batèe* ritual on death ceremonies are the main requirements in this ritual because they have their own significance and symbolic meaning. The symbolic meaning of this tombstone is that as a grave marker, prayers (*shamadiah*) is also be read at the stone is laid, with the hope that the stone will always glorify and bring goodness to the corpse. *Jarak* tree (*bak*

nawah) is one of the plants that is also used in the stages of the *pula batèe* ritual processions. The used of this tree as a symbol of convenience because this tree is easy to live in various weather conditions and does not need special care. It is hoped that all matters will be made easier for the corpse in the afterlife and the roots are not too developed so they do not damage the grave. Coconut leaves are tight and lined up as a symbol of togetherness. It is hoped that the corpse will be able to be together with the faithful in the future, apart from that it can also protect the corpse from rain because the corpse is no longer in the world who can take shelter when it rains. Water mixed with fragrances is the source of all life. The symbolic meaning of water is a sign of coolness. The fragrances used are flowers and *pandan* leaves so that the grave is always fragrant.

Teungku Imum's Response to the Pula Batèe Ritual

The *pula batèe* ritual is said something that was done by the Prophet Muhammad SAW on the grave of his brother Ustman Bin Maz'un. It continues to be carried out until it becomes a cultural heritage, said Teungku Faizun. This ritual is also carried out as a sign that it is a grave and this place must be respected and honored. He also said:

"*Pula batèe* ritual is a practice that has religious values and is part of a tradition that must be preserved. During the *pula batèe* ritual, prayers are recited with the hope that the stone will continue to glorify the corpse and thus ease the torment of Allah SWT, therefore the process must involve people who understand religion. In this case, it shows that the *pula batèe* ritual is considered a form of respect and glorification of the deceased."

Alamsyah, another *teungku* in this village, believes that the *pula batèe* ritual has the aim of strengthening the relationship between individuals. According to him, this tradition has the benefit of strengthening

social relations and building good relationships with fellow communities. Another aim of this *pula batèe* ritual, according to him is that people do not treat the grave carelessly so that it maintains its sanctity and sacredness. Furthermore, he explained that this tradition must continue to be preserved and carried out at every grave to provide awareness to the community that this is a cemetery, so they are not allowed to do bad things in that area. It is said that magical things have happened which sometimes cannot be proven logically but are still believed by some people until now, namely when someone comes to a new place for the first time and defecates in places similar to graves. When he returned home the person fell ill so he had to return to the place to apologize for his actions.

According to Teungku Syafari, this ritual can awaken each individual to always remember the death which has been ordained by Allah SWT. Even though this ritual is *sunnah*, it is deeply embedded in the life of the local community. Teungku Syafari's view describes this ritual as a practice that involves all elements of life in society, has social and cultural value, and provides an opportunity to strengthen relationships between individuals and community groups (Manan et al., 2024), and strengthen kinship relations, serve as a means of establishing between humans and their creators and relationships between humans that reflect the harmony and obedience of society to religious and cultural beliefs under all conditions.

Conclusion

In process of the *pula batèe* ritual, the corpse's family prepares a tombstone, *jarak* tree, coconut leaves, and water mixed with fragrances. The local community chooses the seventh day after death to carry out the *pula batèe* ritual. Apart from that, on the same day, the family holds a big feast by slaughtering a goat or cow and serving it to the entire village community. This feast is

intended as a form of alms for the soul of the deceased because after the seventh day, it is believed that the soul of the corpse is lifted into the sky. The *jarak* tree is used as a symbol of convenience because the tree is easy to live in various weather conditions and does not need a special care. It is hoped that all matters will be made easier for the corpse in the afterlife. Coconut leaves are tight and lined up as a symbol of togetherness, it is hoped that the corpse will be together and in line with believers. The symbolic meaning of water is as a sign of coolness, the fragrances used are hoped that the grave will be fragrant like in heaven. The *pula batèe* ritual on death ceremonies must continue to be carried out and preserved because this is *sunnah* and has become a tradition passed down from generation to generation and can build solidarity and unity among the community because it involves the entire village community to help the family of the deceased, reflecting the local harmony.

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