

The Role of *Mukim* in Aceh Development

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ABSTRACT

Aceh is one of the well-known province of the Aceh Kingdom, one of the great Islamic Kingdom in the world. Islam creates all cultures in Aceh, including the government system. *Mukim* is unique, only found in the Aceh government structure, influenced by Islam. This study addressed this research problem: To what extent *mukim* play his roles in Aceh development. The method employed was social research supported by library research. The result showed that the first function of *Mukim* was a leader of Friday praying. Because of the charismatic profile and his ability to stand and mediate between Sultan and people, the position of *Mukim* was very strategic in the development of Aceh. Unfortunately, after the Independence of Indonesia, role and function of *Mukim* had reduced. Even in new order era, there was not any *Mukim* left due to the centralistic system. Later, in the reformation era, *Mukim* reappears in the government. Regulation number 6 of the Year 2014 about Village was established after the government has seriously considered how to increase the development with Acehese culture. To sum up, *Mukim* today reclaims his position, but the function is different from the time in the period of Aceh Kingdom. Government must strive to reformulate the function of *Mukim* as he used to.

Keywords: *Mukim, Aceh, development*

1. INTRODUCTION

Aceh has a unique Islamic history, culture, ethnicity, and traditions; it is different from the other provinces in Indonesia, that create a firm ethno-religious identity. [1] Islam has formed the identity of Acehese people since the inception. Legal values and cultural norms integrated with Islam have become the way of life for Acehese people.[2] BJ Bolland, a Dutch anthropologist, said : "Being an Aceh is equivalent to being a Muslim" .[3] The influence of Islamic law on the customary law has merged into an unity. Many historical studies have agreed that Aceh is the first area reverting to Islam in Indonesia, before it was developed in the archipelago and Southeast Asia.

The elaboration of Islamic values into Acehese customs and culture has made Acehese people to be religious society. Religious reflections also contribute in influencing the government systems of Aceh, one of such reflections is *mukim*. The term *mukim*, in Indonesia, may only be found in Aceh. The presence of a *mukim* is closely related to the inclusion of Islamic teachings in Aceh as the evidence in executing Friday praying that must be attended by at least 40 adult men.

Article 18B (1) of the 1945 Constitution confirms that the state acknowledges and respects special regional government units regulated by law. Based on this provision, it can be seen that the state grants the existence of special regions. The term "special" has broad scope of definitions, one of those is because of possibility to establish the regional government with special autonomy.[4] The Indonesian

Constitution has expressly appreciated the special characteristics of the regions, one of those is Aceh.

Regional specialty is fortified with the enactment of Law Number 6 of the Year 2014 concerning Village Law which implies village development based on the rights of origins. *Mukim*, who is the coordinator of several villages (*gampong*), has the opportunity due to enforcement of this regulation. However, todays condition hinders *Mukim* to play his excellent role, thus he is unable to contribute to the development of Aceh. Various problems from the colonial period up to new order period has reduced the role of *mukim* in the Aceh government or it is merely as an customary institution. This paper will discuss the roles of *Mukim* in development in Aceh.

2. Law Of Government Of Aceh As Representation Of Specialties In Aceh

The enactment of Law number 11 of the Year 2006, concerning Government of Aceh (LoGA), constitutes the anti-climax of the prolonged conflict between the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) and Republic of Indonesia. The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) points that "New law will be enforced as soon as possible, not later than March 31, 2006" in lieu of Law Number 18 of 2001, concerning with Special Autonomy for the Special Region of Aceh as the Province of Nanggroe Aceh Darussalam (Law of NAD). The Government of Indonesia has interpreted the MoU into the LoGA (Law of Government of Aceh). The enactment of LoGA grants the Aceh Government the rights to apply rules based on the specialties of Aceh.

LoGA provides privileges to the Government of Aceh to establish the government system according to Aceh identity. The supreme customary institution in Aceh called *Wali Nanggroe* is revived to regulate various customary activities and institutions in Aceh. One of Acehnese customary institutions revived is *Mukim*. *Mukim* had actually existed before Indonesia's independence, then receded after the independence. The implementation of the LoGA had *mukim* return to the structure of Aceh government under the sub-district and coordinating several *gampong* (villages).

3. Role Of Mukim

By means of the Qanun (Constitution in Achenese Kingdom) Meukuta Alam Al-Asyi, Sultan issued a positive law in the form of Custom of Meukuta Alam to regulate the government.[5] At that time, Sultan formed a *mukim* which was a religious bond which became part in the structure of Sultan's government. *Mukim* could closely mingle and mediate between the Ulema and the population so that sultan included the mukim in his power hierarchy. As a real power, *mukim* was the supporting power base for Sultan when fighting against the outside forces.

The defeat of Japan by the allies did not get equal support from Acehnese people. This was due to different conditions experienced during the Dutch and Japanese occupation. When Jakarta had proclaimed Indonesian independence, Aceh had not yet determined its political direction. *Uleebalang* (Head of District), who had experienced the conveniences from the Dutch government, hoped to return to their governance. While Ulemas expected Aceh to support Indonesia's independence. These different perspectives lead to some interests of power in Aceh.[6]

Mukim at that time was like in the period of Japanese occupation, squeezed under the influence of power. *Mukim* became the struggle for the power influence of military organizations formed by ulemas and *uleebalang*. *Mukim* became the victim of successors of Indonesian government policies. At the beginning of independence, *Mukim* tried to survive against the social dynamics by adopting the Indonesian system and arranging it to survive between the policies of the Indonesian government and the contradictory policies of the local authorities.[7]

"Orde Baru" (New order) was marked by the marginalization of *mukim* through Law Number 5 of the Year 1974, concerning with Principles of Regional Government. The background of the enactment of this regulation was the desire to facilitate regional command in one policy line. The trauma left by previous government with various differences made the government issued the same territorial power structure for the region. Efficiency and effectiveness of the command may be achieved, but this policy overrides the values of local wisdom, including the role of *Mukim*.

The role and function of mukim in "Orde Baru" (New order) was just as the life proverb, "hidup segan mati tak mau", that can be translated as "hardly living but not dying". There was no legal standard regarding with the existence of the *Mukim* even though by de facto *Mukim* was exist (limited to carrying out traditional rituals). Various centralized New

order policies and unfinished conflicts of Darul Islam / Indonesian Islamic Army (DI/TII), leading by Daud Beureuh who demanded preferential treatment to Aceh had increasingly led to the disharmonious relation between Aceh and Jakarta. This disharmonious relationship culminated and caused the founding of Free Aceh Movement (GAM), which was responded by issuing a military emergency policy in Aceh. *Mukim*, who was once the basis for the consolidation of the Ulemas struggling against injustices, was trapped between Indonesia and GAM. Many *Imeum Mukim* were murdered because they were accused of siding to one party involved in the conflict. Almost all customary institutions at *Mukim* level were paralyzed. *Mukim's* partnering team, such as *Panglima Uteun* (Commandor of Forestry) who used to deal with the forest problems, did not dare doing activities due to fear of being considered as GAM supporters.

The condition of Indonesia during new order led to the peak of disappointment in 1998. One of the issues attempted in the reformation was the recognition of regional diversity as a form of democracy and justice enforcement. Law Number 44 of the Year 1999, concerning the Implementation of Distinctive Privileges of Special Province of Aceh is one of the proofs of government recognition for Aceh's privileges. This regulation affirms the recognition of Indonesian to Aceh because of the struggles and social values maintained for generations as the spiritual, moral, and humanitarian foundation. This regulation has enabled *Mukim* as traditional institution of government to revive his position in government of Aceh.

To reinforce the recognition of privileges of Aceh, central government issued the NAD Law. The regulation was realized in the formation of institutions, such as *Wali Nanggroe* (Supreme Customary Institution), Sharia Court, *Mukim*, and *Qanun* (code of law in Aceh). These revived institutions constitute the recognition of identity of Aceh. *Mukim* is the legal unity of community in Nanggroe Aceh Darussalam (NAD), consisting of several villages with certain boundaries and assets, that is directly under the sub-district and led by *Imeum Mukim*.

In the course of its implementation, Law of NAD has not been able to provide justice for the people, where the armed conflict between Republic of Indonesia and GAM continued. The long-standing conflict ended with the signing of Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the Government of Indonesia and GAM on 15th August 2005, known as Helsinki MoU. This stage was the initial stage of peace in Aceh. The period of peace was marked by the enactment of the LoGA.

The LoGA is the result of improved relation between the Government of Indonesia and Aceh. By applying this regulation, Government of Aceh has actually conducted a series of revitalization strategies for *Mukim* since 2001, in the early stages of democratization in Indonesia. After being restricted and reduced in the centralized new order era, the role of *Mukim* is now being revitalized by the issuance of the LoGA. This revitalization is likely to progress since Aceh has the motivation for peace, that allows opportunities for the expression of Aceh's privileges, demonstrated by the existence of traditional institutions *mukim* and *gampong*.

Referring to this understanding, efforts to revive *mukim* reflect the accommodation from the government interests, namely, the state and society in an institutional form. Formally, LoGA has implied that all *mukims* play the role of government administration between the Sub-district and *Gampong*.

4. Role Of Mukim As Intermediary

Mukim is highly respected by Acehnese people for his religious figure. For facilitating the management of royal government at the time, Sultan Iskandar Muda bestowed additional duties and responsibilities as the head of government to *mukim*. Historically, the placement of *mukim* as the head of government has inspired the Government of Indonesia to give same responsibilities and duties as in the royal period. In the reformation era, Indonesian government tried to provide the opportunity for *mukim* to exist within the Aceh government to appreciate the history of Aceh and to facilitate the administration of the Aceh government.

This condition is welcome by the Aceh government by issuing a Qanun regulating *mukim*. Article 3 of Aceh Qanun, No 4 of the Year 2003, concerning Mukim Government in the Province of Nanggroe Aceh Darussalam (Qanun *mukim*), stating that *mukim* has the task to organize the government, implement the development, foster the people, and improve the implementation of Islamic law. In accordance with the stipulated Qanun, *mukim* has authority over the sub-district as the government, *gampong* as the subordinate government, and the people as well as his religious function. Referring to the Qanun, we can conclude that basically *mukim* has a significant role in the development of Aceh. The power and authority of a *mukim* enables him to be a government institution in the province of Aceh, having a legal power and duty to serve the people and improve the public welfare within a village.

In the administration of government, *mukim* is responsible in overcoming social inequalities in community and providing a comprehensive service to avoid the violation of rules. Such condition leads to *mukim* having intermediation function or as an representatives of the government, directly related to and mingle with community. The intermediation function is expected to be effective since *mukim* is a trusted figure to deliver people aspirations to the government. In addition, the government will more easily obtain the information concerning the community needs through the presence of *mukim*.

5. Role Of Mukim In Development Of Aceh

The function of *mukim* as the community and government intermediary is expected to accelerate the development of Aceh. The program of revitalizing the functions of *mukim* to revive his position in the structure of Aceh government has put *mukim* in a strategic position. A *mukim* with religious values can provide consultation to the community and offer solutions to problems, and is respected by the community. Therefore, in expressing aspirations, the community will be more open and trust the *mukim*. The

government allows opportunities for the citizens who uphold Islamic religious values and are trusted by the community to be included the Aceh government.

The presence of Law of Village and Law number 23 of the Year 2014, concerning Regional Government, provides an opportunity for *mukim* to revive in the Aceh government. In these two regulations, the state recognizes the existence of territories based on the rights of the origins of their regions. The regulation of villages is a big leap in the recognition of village sovereignty. This policy is very progressive since it opens the access and relationship between the state and rural communities. The relationship has been imbalanced so that it hinders the creativity and innovation in developing villages. By the Law of Village, the state seeks to delegate its authority to Village Government as the representative to directly reach the community.

The implementation of village regulation is a process of authority delegation and power decentralization through constitutional steps. The delegation is expected to establish characters fitting the local wisdom. From the sociological perspective, to create a just and prosperous society following the mandate of the 1945 Constitution, Indonesian people must start a new paradigm to build from the structure of village governance since the majority of populations of Indonesia are living in villages. Social, cultural, economic, and political degradation must be restored through village autonomy, and sociologically, the entities of village community must be strengthened.

In achieving the welfare system, the community can utilize resources and learn the local wisdom of the region. Local wisdom consists of local culture which constitute local knowledge integrated with systems of belief, norms, and cultures expressed in the traditions and myths adopted for a long time.[8] The sustainability of local wisdom is reflected in the values applied in certain community groups. These values become the references of certain groups of communities as part of life that can be observed through their daily attitudes and conducts.9 [10] Some values and forms of local wisdom, including customary law, cultural values, and existing cultures, are relevant to be applied in the process or rules of regional planning, such as those found in indigenous peoples, determined for certain activities. These opportunities put *mukim* as a local wisdom of Aceh in the structure of Aceh government between the sub-district and *gampong* to play a role in development of Aceh.

One of the considerations in establishing the Law of Village is that villages have developed into various forms that need to be protected and empowered to be solid, progressive, independent, and democratic to create a strong foundation in conducting the governance and development for a just and prosperous society. Villages, in the structure of Aceh government are called *gampong*, combined into *mukim* to facilitate the coordination with government. Administratively, according to *Qanun Mukim*, the *Keuchik* reports to the *mukim* and is responsible for running various development activities in the *gampong*. Based on organization structure, *Mukim* reports to the sub-district leader and is responsible for directing and coordinating with *Keuchik*. This condition will certainly be an opportunity to realize effective development of Aceh.

This role is supported by village funds, sourced from APBN (State Budget). Within the framework of village autonomy, all forms of village government affairs are under the authority of the village, including village financial management. Opportunities for the village supported by the central government encourage village independence in determining development policies. The role of *mukim* as government intermediary, that acts as a liaison with the community, is expected to contribute to the development of Aceh. Another expectation from the availability of village funds for *mukim* is to create harmonious coordination between *keuchik* in determining the direction of development policies.

The revived role of *mukim* into the structure of the Aceh government should have accelerated the development to realize the prosperity. When *mukim* reclaims his role, development should be optimal and right on the target. This optimism is expected to increase community participation through *mukim*. The intermediary function of *mukim* in the development of Aceh will be seen when the government policy considerations involve *mukim* as government representatives who know the needs of the community.

6. CONCLUSION

The establishment of Village Law should be used as an opportunity to synergize the values of local wisdom into the village development, in this case is, the role of the *mukim* as a government institution in Aceh. Thus, the development based on local wisdom in Aceh will run optimally and right on target. *Mukim* is currently in the revitalization phase after its role being reduced for a long time. The process of reformulation and reconstruction of the role of *mukim* requires encouragement from various parties. Therefore, both the people and government of Aceh must continuously stimulate for the roles of the ideal *mukim* as in the golden era of Sultan Iskandar Muda.

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