



## Cultural Convergence: The Influence of Indian Traditions on Birth Traditions in Aceh

Yuni Saputri<sup>1\*</sup>, Elora Tribedy<sup>2</sup>, Heri Fajri<sup>1</sup>, Widia Munira<sup>1</sup>, Rizka Purnama Sari<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Department of History Education, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Universitas Jabal Ghafur, Indonesia.

<sup>2</sup> Department of Historical Studies, Nalanda University, India.

<sup>3</sup> Karanganyar Regency Education and Culture, Indonesia.

\* Correspondence author: [yunisaputriindonesia@gmail.com](mailto:yunisaputriindonesia@gmail.com)

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### ABSTRACT

Studies of Acehese culture have predominantly focused on Islamic traditions, leaving pre-Islamic heritage particularly the Hindu-Buddhist influence introduced from India largely unexplored. As a central ritual in society marking the beginning of life, birth traditions in Aceh form a cultural genetic system that incorporates Indian, Islamic, and local elements at various level. This study seeks to explore the extent and ratio of Indian cultural influence in Acehese birth traditions, especially in the context of a society now largely shaped by Islamic values. The study used qualitative ethnographic method based on Spradley's theoretical framework, with data collected through participant observation and interview. The findings reveal that Indian influence remains evident in the symbols and rituals associated with birth traditions in Aceh, which encompass processions such as *Khanduri*, *Peusijeuk*, *Intat Bu/Me Bu*, *Tanom Adoe*, and *Peutreun Aneuk*. More complexly, the *Peusijeuk* tradition, which involves the use of water and leaves as ritual objects and signifies the aspiration for blessings, is demonstrably a Hindu influence that has since undergone Islamic syncretism, evidenced by the inclusion of Islamic prayers during the ritual. These findings highlight the complex and ongoing nature of cultural assimilation in Aceh, where Indian and Islamic influences coexist within the local cultural framework.

## 1. Introduction

The historical and cultural relationship between Aceh and India is of significant interest due to India's status as a center of advanced civilizations in South Asia.

Aceh, once as strategic location in Southeast Asia, has maintained longstanding connections with India. Indian influence in Aceh spans both the Hindu-Buddhist and Islamic periods, with the spread of Islam often attributed to Indian origins, particularly through the widely accepted Gujarati or Indian theory of Islamization in the Indonesian archipelago. This highlights India's historical role as a key conduit between East and West, and Aceh's strategic position as an international maritime gateway (Ahmad, 1992).

The Hindus came to Aceh for trading and developed their religion and culture, and they interacted with and married the local community so that by the 9th century AD many Hindus had settled in the archipelago (Hasymy, 1981). The descendants of the Indians are mostly Gujarati and Tamil. The Indianization process in Aceh has been ongoing for a considerable period of time, then after the coming of Islam, there were adjustments in various community activities. One evidence of Hindu influence in Aceh can be seen in some of the results of Islamic Hindu culture. Various shreds of evidence of Indian cultural heritage in Aceh show that the Indianization process was running peacefully, but when the existence of the Acehnese began to be disturbed and India wanted to expand the colony by force, Aceh fought back in various ways. The evidence of the resistance that was carried out was the resistance of the Lamuri Kingdom in Aceh Besar against the Cola Kingdom of India in 1030 AD. This incident was written in the Tanjore inscription in Nalanda, India which states that the Lamuri Kingdom is a kingdom that has a good government system, a strong fortress, and the people are prosperous, so it is very difficult to conquer (Ibrahim & As, 2016).

Anthropologically, the early customs and culture of the Acehnese people were very thick and attached to the influence of Hindu cultural elements such as the ways of women dressed, customs, rituals, traditions, and the Acehnese language (Said, 1981). This happened because before Islam entered Aceh, the influence of Hinduism in Aceh, which had its roots, gradually collapsed after the coming of Islam, which then resulted in a mixture of cultures so that Islam dominated the lives of the Acehnese.

History has shown that Aceh has had cultural diversity since ancient times, and it has been preserved until today. This can be seen from the continued practice of various cultural traditions, both in urban and rural areas (Nur, 2020). Based on their types, ceremonies can be categorized into two categories: Individual Life Cycle Ceremonies and Ritual of Application Ceremonies. Individual Life Cycle Ceremonies include ceremonies related to various stages of an individual's life cycle, such as infancy, weaning, childhood, adolescence, adulthood, engagement, marriage, pregnancy, old age, and death (Fitria, 2012).

Among these, birth ceremonies hold particular cultural significance and constitute the central focus of this study. Within Acehnese society, birth-related rituals are notably diverse and rich in symbolic meaning. These ceremonies comprise a series of interconnected rituals that extend from the prenatal phase through childbirth and into the early stages of the child's life. Compared to other ceremonial forms, birth rituals exhibit a more intricate structure, underscoring

their cultural importance and their role in the acculturation process through the integration of external cultural influences into Acehese traditions. As such, the birth ceremony presents a compelling case for examining the dynamics of cultural acculturation in Aceh.

To date, studies on cultural acculturation within birth ritual practices have been conducted in various regions across Indonesia. However, there is a noticeable lack of research focused specifically on the province of Aceh particularly with regard to Indian cultural influences. This is despite the fact that Indian culture has, in reality, become deeply integrated and ingrained within local traditions.

One example of existing literature is the work of (Arifin & @ Hambali, 2016) who examined the acculturation between pre-Islamic and Islamic cultural elements in Aceh through the *Rah Ulei* tradition among the Pidie Jaya community. Another is the thesis by (Hati, 2019) which investigates cultural acculturation in death rituals among the people of Kuta Tinggi, Southwest Aceh. Her study explores several death ceremonies related traditions such as *Khanduri Selamatan*, the *Reuhab* tradition, *Tulak Beras*, and *Khanduri Jirat* – all of which demonstrate the transformation of earlier Hindu practices through processes of Islamization

Furthermore, an article by (Mustafa & Hidayat, 2017) explains that the culture of Central Aceh has undergone a process of 'Gayonization of Islam' within birth, marriage, and funeral ceremonies. This acculturation involves two key dynamics: the substitution of traditional meanings with Islamic values, and the infusion of Islamic principles into customary rituals. In contrast, (Abubakar, 2016) discusses the Islamic values embedded in the Maulid tradition, viewing it as a form of interaction between Islam and local culture in Acehese society. Then (Mulya et al., 2025) article examines acculturation in the wedding ceremonies of the Southeast Aceh community, focusing on the *Pemamaman* tradition. Similarly, (Wardani & Najwah, 2024) study describes the implementation of the *Peutron Aneuk* tradition in Matang Seulimeng village and explores the community's reception and interpretation of Hadiths within that practice.

Other studies related to the process of cultural acculturation between local and foreign traditions in Aceh include the work of (Attas & Anoegrajekti, 2021), which discusses the integration of Islamic values with local customs in the *Khanduri Blang* tradition practiced by the Aceh Besar community. Additionally, (Tami, 2022) examines the embodiment of local wisdom among the Mandailing diaspora in Krueng Sikajang Village, Lemba Jaya Hamlet, through the *Manjagit Paroppa* tradition, as a form of cultural acculturation between migrant and local cultures.

To the best of the author's knowledge, there has been no research specifically dedicated to explore the acculturation of Indian culture within birth ceremonies in Aceh. This represents a significant research gap that warrants further exploration. The present study focuses on a number of traditions and rituals within the series of birth-related ceremonies in Aceh that, from an ethnographic perspective, exhibit clear cultural connections with Indian influences. These

include *Khanduri* and *Peusijuek*, which serve as two primary rituals initiating most ceremonial practices in Aceh, as well as the *Intat Bu/Me Bu* tradition, the *Tanom Adoe* ritual, and the *Peutleun Aneuk* tradition.

## 2. Method

This research employs a qualitative methodology (Anggito & Setiawan, 2018) with an ethnographic (Rezhi et al., 2023) approach to gain an in-depth understanding of the social and cultural dynamics within a specific community. It explores the complex relationships, practices, and beliefs that shape individuals' lived experiences. This study was conducted over a three-month period and concentrated on Acehnese communities predominantly residing along the eastern coast, including including 1. Mns. Reuleuet Village, Kota Juang District, Bireuen Regency, 2. Blang Paseh Village, Sigli District, Pidie Regency, and 3. Sibreh Village, Suka Makmur District, Aceh Besar Regency, whose cultures are largely similar due to shared historical influences, particularly from India.

An ethnographic approach is conducted, following in Spradley's theoretical framework, which classifies culture into three parts: cultural knowledge, cultural behavior, and cultural artifacts (Winarno, 2015). Cultural knowledge is utilized to comprehend the meaning of Indian cultural elements that have become integral to the tradition of Acehnese society. Cultural behavior elucidates the manifestation of Indian cultural elements in the social behavior and ritual practices of Acehnese birth traditions. Concurrently, cultural artifacts represent the material forms of Acehnese culture that demonstrate the influence or integration of Indian elements within the birth tradition.

Data collection was carried out through participant observation, interviews, and documentation (Wijaya, 2018). In participant observation, we serves as insiders (Winarno, 2015) to closely observing cultural materials, ritual processes, symbols and meanings embedded in Acehnese birth traditions within their natural setting, while systematically recording and documenting these cultural practices.

There are 20 informants participaed in this study, consisting of five community leaders (two from Bireuen Regency, another two from Pidie Regency and one from Aceh Besar Regency). They are staffs of the Majelis Adat Aceh (MAA) and cultural observers in Aceh}. In addition, there are 15 community members involved in this study who are from the three village locations.

Data analysis was conducted using Spradley's qualitative data analysis (Wijaya, 2018), which was systematically applied throughout this study. *First*, domain analysis was employed to identify categories of meaning associated with terms, symbols, and actions used by the community within birth traditions. *Second*, taxonomic analysis was used to demonstrate that certain elements found in Acehnese birth ceremonies originate from Indian culture, yet have been integrated with Islamic values and local Acehnese customs. *Third*, componential analysis was conducted to determine distinguishing attributes among elements

within the domain, through comparisons based on function, symbolic meaning, origin, and the frequency of use across various birth traditions in Aceh. Finally, the discovery of cultural themes was used to describe how Indian cultural elements have been assimilated and reinterpreted within Acehnese birth traditions. These analytical steps culminated in the production of an ethnographic research report that captures the depth and complexity of cultural syncretism in the observed practices.

Ethical research conduct was upheld, obtaining written informed consent from all informants for all research activities, including interviews, documentation of the ritual, and recording during interviews. To ensure confidentiality and protect participants' identities, pseudonyms are used for all informants mentioned in this research.

### 3. Result and Discussion

#### • Birth Tradition in Aceh

The birth traditions in Aceh commence from the period when the mother is still pregnant. The ceremonies conducted form a continuous series of activities, spanning from pregnancy to childbirth.

##### *During Pregnancy*

The tradition of childbirth within Acehnese society commences during the period of pregnancy. Typically, this series of ceremonial events is conducted in anticipation of the birth of the first child. These traditions reflect the local wisdom of the Acehnese people in facing the crucial human life phase, namely birth. The community firmly believes that every action, utterance, and behavior of the mother throughout her pregnancy will influence the condition and character of the child to be born. There are four rituals involved in sequence which are *peusijuek*, *pantangan*, *mee bu/ba bu*, and *meuramien*. *Peusijuek* is a traditional Acehnese ritual performed in nearly all important activities, serving as a blessing that marks the start of subsequent ceremonies *mee bu / ba bu* (bringing food) tradition is practiced when the pregnancy reaches the seventh month, will discuss further in the Birth Tradition Influence by Indian Culture section below. *Pantangan* (taboo) in which pregnant women are subject to various taboos intended to protect both mother and fetus from harm or misfortune. These include avoiding sitting at the edge of stairs (*duk bak ulee reunyeun*), going outside at dusk or night (*tubit malam uro*), stepping over graves (*gilhee naleung*), visiting desolate places (*tubit tempat supot*), discussing inappropriate topics (*sumang*), and observing mystical objects or animals (*teumameung*). Such restrictions stem from the belief that pregnancy makes a woman physically and spiritually vulnerable, increasing her susceptibility to malevolent spirits. To safeguard against these dangers, pregnant women wear an amulet, upon which prayers (*rajah*) have been recited, tied around their waist. *Meuramien* ceremony, involving a communal meal hosted by the family, is held for the *dara baro* (wife) during her first pregnancy. This ritual offers emotional comfort and social support, reflecting the traditional view of childbirth as a significant and life-threatening event (*sabong nyaweung*).

### *Postnatal Ceremonies*

The postnatal ceremony consists of two stages: the initial stage and the subsequent stage following birth. The initial stage refers to a series of traditions performed immediately after the baby is born, while the subsequent stage takes place when the baby reaches forty-four days of age. The period before the forty-fourth day is known as *madeung*. *Madeung* is a traditional postpartum healing practice that has been passed down through generations in Acehnese society. This tradition aims to restore the mother's physical and emotional well-being after childbirth through a series of customary healing practices. During the forty-four-day period, the mother remains at home, and all her needs are attended to by *ma blien*, a traditional midwife appointed by the family to care for the new mother.

In the initial stage following birth, there are three rituals involved, namely *koh pusat*, *azan* or *iqamah*, and *tanom adoe*. *Koh Pusat* (cutting the baby's umbilical cord) is ritual which is conducted immediately after birth, the midwife cuts the newborn's umbilical cord—using a seven-colored (red, yellow, green, black, white, blue, brown) thread for boys and a five-colored (red, yellow, green, black, white) one for girls, symbolizing their differing physical strengths. The traditional birth attendant (*dukun beranak* or *ma Blien*) the cord is cut with a specially prepared bamboo blade called *Teumen* or *Buloh*. The mother's family typically provides turmeric and betel leaves, while the father's family supplies the cloth (*ija tumpee*) to wrap the baby. The cutting process involves tying both ends of the cord with the colored thread, followed by cutting the cord with a knife. The severed cord is then anointed with turmeric, a substance symbolizing nobility and dignity. The infant is subsequently bathed with warm water and swaddled. Following this, the in-laws prepare a ceremonial spray comprising betel leaves, areca nut, lime, and gambier, which is then sprinkled over the baby. *Azan* or *iqamah* (the Islamic call to prayer) is a ritual introduces the newborn to the Islamic faith. The *azan* or *iqamah* is softly recited into the infant's right and left ears in sequence, with the infant oriented towards the Qibla. This sacred act is traditionally performed by the infant's father. *Tanom Adoe* refers to the ceremonial burring of the placenta, a ritual of significant cultural importance that will be discussed in greater detail in a subsequent chapter.

In subsequent stage following birth, there five rituals involved, namely *cuko ok*, *peucicap*, *aqikah*, *peutreun aneuk*, and *peutreun dapu*. *Cuko ok* is the ritual of shaving the newborn's hair, typically performed when the infant reaches one month of age. The purpose of this rite is to remove the newborn's hair, believed to carry impurities from birth. *Peucicap* ceremony marks the introduction of solid foods to the infant, usually occurring at one month of age. Foods commonly offered include fruits, chicken liver, and fish. This ritual feeding is conducted by a person of respected character and standing within the community, with the gender of the feeder matching that of the infant. *Aqikah* is an Islamic ritual involving the sacrificial slaughter of buffalo and goats. This practice serves as an expression of gratitude and religious devotion. *Peutreun aneuk* ceremony celebrates the infant's first time stepping onto the ground will be discussed in

greater detail in a subsequent chapter. *Peutleun dapu* is a celebration held at the wife's family home to honor the mother's service in giving birth. The food is customarily provided by the paternal family, underscoring the importance of familial bonds in the child's early life. This tradition is held on the 44<sup>th</sup> day after childbirth, coinciding with the completion of the *madeung* period. On this occasion, extended family members gather to partake in a communal feast known as *khanduri*.

- **Ritual of Birth Tradition and Indian Culture**

Based on the research findings, the author discovered that within the series of Acehese childbirth traditions, several cultural elements still exhibit influence from Indian culture, specifically from the Hindu tradition that thrived before the arrival of Islam in Aceh. This influence is evident in five main rituals that are still preserved by some community members: *khanduri*, *peusijuek*, *intat bu*, *tanom adoe*, and *peutleun aneuk*.

Although all these rituals have now been adapted to Islamic values, the traces of past cultural syncretism are still discernible in the symbols, ceremonial equipment, and procedures of their execution. This indicates a process of cultural adaptation where elements of the old tradition were not completely abandoned, but were rather absorbed and Islamized to align with the beliefs of Acehese society, which is founded on Islamic sharia. These five rituals will be discussed in the following sections.

#### *Khanduri*

*Khanduri* is a long-standing Acehese tradition of serving specially prepared food to guests, commonly practiced during various events, occasions, receptions, ceremonies, religious ceremonies, expressions of gratitude, and other relevant social gatherings. Although deeply rooted in Acehese culture, the term originates from the Gujarati word meaning "food from *Khandahar*." Integrated into daily life, *khanduri* is used to mark both joyful and sorrowful occasions, often beginning and ending gatherings. It strengthens communal bonds and fosters unity in giving thanks to Allah. Types of *khanduri* include *khanduri blang* (*khanduri* for agricultural activities), *khanduri laot* (sea *khanduri*), and *khanduri walimah* (wedding *khanduri*) (Alfari, 2021).

The *khanduri* tradition in Aceh society goes beyond being simply a ritual (Hanif et al., 2022). It is deeply ingrained into every aspect of life, and as such, almost every sacred activity is prefaced and concluded with a *kenduri* as a form of honor. Tradition has become a necessity in all dimensions of life, including birth and death (Afadlal & Irine, 2008). The three types of *khanduri* in Aceh reflect the diverse cultural and religious influences that have shaped the region's history and traditions.

The *first* type of *khanduri* is based on the natural world and supernatural powers, emphasizing the role of spiritual and mystical forces in daily life. This type of *khanduri* is deeply rooted in animistic beliefs and practices that recognize the presence of spiritual entities in the environment. The *second* type of *khanduri* is

based on religion, reflecting the influence of Islam on Acehese culture and traditions. Islamic *Khanduri* often integrated into community events like weddings and funerals, though some are purely religious, such as *khanduri* held before *Istisqa* prayer (prayer to ask for rain from Allah). The *third* type of *khanduri* is based on the themes of life and death, reflecting the deep cultural and religious significance attached to these concepts in Acehese society. This type of *khanduri* is often associated with rites of passage, such as births, circumcisions, and funerals, and serves as a means of marking important transitions and milestones in the human experience.

In addition, *khanduri* plays a significant role in Acehese society in terms of respecting and honoring guests through the provision of various food items. Acehese culture is renowned for its emphasis on "*peumulia jamee*", a term used to describe the act of honoring guests. This honor is typically bestowed upon guests through the presentation of food. According to Kalangi, food is a cultural concept that encompasses materials that have been culturally accepted and processed to be consumed following a preparation and presentation process that is also culturally appropriate in order to maintain good health (Kalangi, 1985).

Figure 1. The food served at wedding *Khanduri*



Source: Personal collection of Yuni Saputri, 2023

Food serves not only as sustenance but also holds deep symbolic significance rooted in social and religious contexts (see Figure 1 above). Socially, it helps maintain order by promoting unity, reinforcing group status, and reflecting hierarchies based on factors like gender, age, or caste. These symbolic meanings are often reinforced through cultural beliefs, values, and superstitions. Food can symbolize social bonding, group solidarity, emotional tension, and even appear as a symbolic element in language (Foster, 1978).

### *Peusijuek*

The term *peusijuek* in the Acehese language is derived from the word "*sijuek*", which translates to "cold." The prefix "*peu*", which means "to make something," is added to the word, resulting in the meaning of "to make something cool and peaceful." As such, the term *peusijuek* can also be interpreted as having connotations of tranquility and calmness. This traditional ceremonial procession

is a cultural practice in the Acehnese community and is performed during significant events such as weddings, traditional celebrations, gratitude offerings, and other ceremonial occasions (Prayetno & Qomaruzzaman, 2021).

The *peusijuek* tradition is a customary procession in the cultural heritage of the Acehnese people. It is performed with the aim of inducing a sense of security, tranquility, and well-being in one's life. This tradition has a long-standing history in the Acehnese culture and continues to be practiced to this day. It is typically executed during communal events such as weddings, Aqiqah, housewarming ceremonies, recovery from illness, Hajj, and circumcision, and as a means of seeking blessings and success for various activities. The *peusijuek* ritual is perceived as a means of attaining prosperity and well-being, as it is considered an integral part of the Acehnese cultural heritage (Batubara et al., 2022).

The materials used in *peusijuek* vary according to the events carried out by the *peusijuek* (see Figure 2 below). In detail, the materials used during *Peusijuek*: I. *Dalong*, II. *Bu Leukat* (sticky rice). III. *U Mirah*. IV. *Breueh pade*. V. *Teupong Taweue* and *ie*. VI. *On sisikuek*, *manek manoe* and *naleueng sambo*. VII. *Glok*. VIII. *Sangee* (Fazal & Mawardi, 2021). Each *peusijuek* piece of equipment has a unique philosophy and meaning for the people of Aceh (Riezal et al., 2019).

Figure 2. Materials in *peusijuek* ritual



Source: Personal Collection of Yuni Saputri, 2023.

The *peusijuek* movement can be indicated and analyzed from the following elements: *peusijuek* performer, and *peusijuek* moment. The first is *peusijuek* performer. While the former refers to people who perform the core *peusijuek* ceremony. They are specific individuals who understand the procedures and the prayers in *peusijuek*. Then, people close to the subject *peusijuek*. For instance, *peusijuek* people who are married or at weddings. The closest people are the biological parents of the bride and groom, grandmothers, grandfathers, uncles, aunts, and others. The person who leads this *peusijuek* is a *Tengku* (male theologian) or *Mi Chik* (female theologian). *Tengku* is a person whose position is as an Imam at the *meunasah* (Mushalla) or Mosque (*Tengku Imum*) or the leader of an Islamic Boarding School (*Dayah*, *Balee*) in a local village and has in-depth religious knowledge. They also have *meuruah* or authority in society. Meanwhile,

*Mi Chik* is a woman who has deep religious knowledge or can be called *Tengku Inong*. They have the authority and position as a woman who is respected and an elder in society. Usually, *Mi Chik* is a woman who has graduated from a traditional Islamic boarding school and performs mysticism. *Mi Chik's* designation differs from each region in Aceh (Ahmad, 2014).

The *second* is moment *peusijuek*. The performance of *peusijuek* is a common tradition in the Acehnese community, often linked to religious or spiritual events. Therefore, its timing is associated with religious or spiritual practices. For example, the *peusijuek* for prospective brides and grooms is performed in the morning before the marriage contract (*akad nikah*). The designated days for *peusijuek*, such as Mondays and Thursdays, are considered auspicious in Islam, reflecting the belief in the positive influence of religious values on the success and blessings of various activities.

Figure 3. Movement in Peusijuek



Source: Personal Collection of Yuni Saputri, 2023.

The *peusijuek* procedure involves several distinct steps, starting with the splashing of *breuh padee* (paddy) all over the body, continue with the splashing leaves (see Figure 3 above) especially the head of the person undergoing the *peusijuek*. The procedure is initiated by reciting the Basmalah, after which the person is sprinkled with flour water three times. Subsequently, *bu leukat kuneng* (yellow glutinous rice) is placed on the right ear. The prayers are read not audible in *peusijuek*. The incorporation of Islamic teachings into the practice of *peusijuek* was a result of the spread of Islam in Aceh. The Sultan and religious leaders ensured that *peusijuek* was adapted to align with the principles of Islam, with the substitution of mantras (Duhri, 2009) with recitations of *muktabar* (prayers that has been recognized and practiced by Islamic scholars throughout history, for example the prayers contained in Sufism books that have been practiced for generations) and *warid* (prayers taught by the Prophet Muhammad in his sunnah, such as prayers for goodness in this world and the hereafter ) according to the specific occasion and purpose of *peusijuek*. The people who took part in *peusijuek* read surah al-Fatihah or prayers for safety in the Acehnese language. The final step involves *Teumetuek*, which entails the giving of money-filled envelopes to children and relatives, followed by a handshake with family and neighbors as a gesture of apology (Marzuki, 2012).

In terms of the location for *peusijuek*, it can be performed at any place that is considered clean and free from unclean hadats and dirt, such as the *meunasah* (surau), mosque, house, village hall. The person undergoing *peusijuek* typically sits in a kneeling position on a *meusugou* bed (a small mat covered with an embroidered sarong), using a *meutampok* pillow (a bolster-shaped pillow with a cloth attached to its end, embroidered on four sides with gold thread) placed on the thigh, as if in a prayerful position. Alternatively, the person can sit with straight knees, hands placed on their feet, to receive the sprinkling of *breuh padee* (1-3 times) and flour (1-3 times), in accordance with the local community's customs and traditions.

Within the acculturation framework between local Acehese traditions and Hindu cultural influences, *peusijuek* is a traditional ritual of the Acehese people that originates from Hindu purification practices, particularly rituals such as Manusa Yajna or Muspa found in Balinese Hinduism. Over time, especially during the reign of Sultan Alaudin Riayat Syah, this ritual underwent significant transformation due to the influence of Islam. This transformation was marked by the invitation of 70 prominent Islamic scholars to compile the Kitab Syara' al-Asyi, a legal text aimed at harmonizing traditional customs with Islamic law (Fazal & Mawardi, 2021).

One of the most notable changes was the replacement of Hindu mantras with Islamic prayers, as well as the removal of incense, which was previously commonly used, and its substitution with the recitation of *Basmallah* (an Islamic phrase meaning: In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful). The excerpts read for purification are in the nature of spells, while in *peusijuek* prayers are read for safety. In Hinduism when performing purification, they use spells, such as: "*Patram puspam phalam toyam yo me bhaktya prayacchati, Tad aham bhakty upahrtam asnami prayatatmanah*" (quote from the holy book Bhagavad Gita Chapter 9, Verse 26, which means: Whoever bows down to Me with an offering of a leaf, a flower, a fruit or a sip of water, I accept as a devotional offering from a sincere person). The underlying purpose of *peusijuek*, which is known as Manusa Yajna in Hinduism, is to purify oneself and attain safety (Fazal & Mawardi, 2021). Although the procedures and objectives of *peusijuek* still bear resemblance to Hindu rituals such as purification and seeking divine protection the essence of the ritual has been adapted to align with Islamic teachings (Duhri, 2009).

The primary distinction between *peusijuek* and Hindu rituals lies in the object of veneration: while Hinduism often involves the worship of deities through statues or idols, Islamic practice, particularly in *peusijuek*, avoids such elements. Instead, the ritual is typically concluded with a short Islamic prayer that reflects monotheistic value (Abdullah M Jakfar, 2016).

#### *Intat Bu/Me Bu* Tradition

*Intat bu/me bu* (giving rice) is a ceremony of handing over rice when a pregnant woman, specifically for the pregnancy of her first child, between 7 and 8 months of pregnancy, a party will be held called: *ba boh kayee* (bringing fruits) also called

*ba bu* or *me bu* (bringing rice with typical side dishes). This custom is carried out by the husband's family who delivers food to his pregnant wife's house, by delivering *bu kulah*, namely rice wrapped in banana leaves in a unique pyramid-shaped package (Aceh, 1990).

According to Acehese tradition, after marriage, the husband and wife usually reside in the wife's family home for a period of time, at least until the first child is born. When the wife is 6 to 7 months pregnant, the husband's family will deliver rice (*intat bu*) to their home. The food ceremony requires are *bu kulah* (rice wrapped in banana leaves) and side dishes such as fish, meat, grilled chicken, and grilled birds. All of these ingredients are combined in two *kateng* (a typical place, some call it a *rantang*). One *kateng* for rice and one *kateng* for side dishes. *Muih* cake and fruit are each placed on a tray. Roasted bird (usually a type of dove) is served especially for pregnant women. The overall aim of the *intat bu* ceremony is for the expectant mother to receive a delicious meal as a tribute from her in-laws for sacrificing for the birth of the baby she is carrying. Because giving birth is considered a risk to one's life (*sabong nyaweng*) (Sufi et al., 2002).

There are also those who refer to it as *keumaweuh*. *Keumaweuh* is performed when the wife is 5 months pregnant with her first child. The ritual is performed by the pregnant wife's parents with *khanduri* accompanied by *pulut* and invites the wife's relatives. A head-washing ceremony (*rah ulhee*) is performed after the wife's family members have gathered. This type of *keumaweuh* is performed when the husband's family does not practice *keumaweuh*.

Figure 4. Bu Kulah



Figure 5. Tumpoe



Source: Personal Collection of Yuni Saputri, 2023

The *keumaweuh* ritual can be conducted during a crucial stage of pregnancy, specifically when the wife is seven months pregnant. It is customary for the husband's parents to bring specific offerings, namely *bu kulah* (see in **Figure 4** above) and *bu leukat*, which are types of glutinous rice, to the pregnant daughter-in-law. These offerings are accompanied by a grilled chicken and *tumpoe* (see in **figure 5** above). Additionally, the spread of side dishes typically includes fish, a variety of cooked meats, boiled chicken and duck eggs, and citrus fruits, among others. The food items are presented in a tiered platter, arranged in a vertical stacking manner. It is considered a gesture of goodwill to extend these offerings to the wife's family as well, as seen in Figure 6 as follows:

Figure 6. The Food Served in *Intat Bu* Tradition

Source: Personal Collection of Yuni Saputri, 2023.

The central aim of the *intat bu* ceremony within the Acehnese community is to convey a formal declaration to the broader society regarding the legitimacy of the pregnancy. The assertion being made is that the fetus being carried by the mother originates from a marriage that is valid and recognized by both traditional customs and legal norms. By making this statement, the community expresses its acceptance of the fetus as a rightful member of the family and extended kin network. The act of declaration also functions as a source of motivation and moral support for the pregnant wife, providing her with a sense of validation and encouragement during this significant life event (Ismail, 2007).

The *intat bu* ceremony among pregnant women is a vestige of Hindu traditions and cultural practices. This type of ceremony is integrated into the *Manusa Yadnya* series of rituals in Hinduism, which constitutes a sacred rite of sacrifice founded upon feelings of love, altruism, and devotion, aimed at improving the completeness of human life and purifying the inner and outer aspects of an individual, commencing with the presence of a fetus in the womb of the mother, until the end of life. Within the *Manusa Yadnya* ritual series, the *intat bu* ceremony is referred to as the *pegedong-gedongan* ceremony (Abdullah M Jakfar, 2016). The *pegedong-gedongan* ceremony also referred to as the Garbha Wedana Ceremony, is a traditional religious rite performed during pregnancy to sanctify and safeguard the unborn child performed by Hindu Bali people. This ritual is usually conducted during the fifth to seventh month of gestation and is considered a significant milestone in the formation of a human being. The primary aim of the ceremony is to purify the soul of the fetus and invoke divine protection, with the ultimate goal of ensuring that the child grows up to be a productive member of society. Additionally, the Magedong-gedongan ceremony is regarded as an important rite for seeking the blessings and safety of both the mother and the fetus during pregnancy (Damayanti, 2020).

#### *Tanom Adoe* Ritual

*Tanom* in Acehnese means the process of planting or burring something. *Adoe* refers to the placenta that is expelled with the birth of a baby in Aceh society. This is also often referred to as the baby's sibling. *Tanom adoe* an Acehnese tradition that requires the newborn's placenta to be properly and securely

buried. This is to prevent the newborn from interfering with animals and harm by supernatural entities that might disturb the baby.

The *adoe* that is born with the baby must be cleaned before planting and placed in a pot made of clay. Several types of salt and acid or ashes are placed inside the pot to make it dry and not rot. The burial location differs between male and female newborns, with the former buried under the rain gutter and the latter buried under the stairs of the house, reflecting cultural beliefs about the roles of men and women in the community. The role and function of the male child as the breadwinner and responsible for the family, while the female child's role is as the queen or homemaker. The placenta must also be buried near the house to prevent the child from leaving their hometown in the future. During the burial, the placenta is planted facing Mecca and accompanied by the recitation of blessings. In some areas of Aceh, the placenta is also *peusijuek*, or treated with ritual, before being buried.

The author discovered that the *tanom adoe* ceremony, which involves planting the placenta, is an indigenous practice and tradition steeped in Hindu religious beliefs that have been passed down from generation to generation within the Acehnese community. According to the Hindu religion, the *tanom adoe* ceremony is known as *menanam ari-ari* (placenta). In this rite, the placenta is given particular attention. It is washed in a mixture of water, flowers, scented oils, betel leaves, and other materials upon its emergence with the birth of the baby. The placenta is then placed inside a yellow coconut, after the water has been drained, and buried on either the right side or the left side of the home, depending on the gender of the newborn. Subsequently, a spiky plant, such as the pandan, is planted on top of the placenta to discourage disturbance from malevolent supernatural entities referred to as Bhuta Kala (Abdullah M Jakfar, 2016).

The present study has uncovered several similarities in the *tanom adoe* or placenta planting ceremony within the Acehnese community, which serves as evidence of its roots in the Hindu religion. Despite some variations in its execution, the study has determined that the practice of placenta planting continues to persist within the Acehnese society, albeit on a limited basis, as a cultural tradition. A segment of the Acehnese population perceives the planting of the placenta as an imperative act, as it is considered a decaying matter that must be interred to deter consumption by animals, such as dogs. The act of planting, however, is merely a procedure of interring the placenta like other decaying materials, lacking any accompanying rituals (Abdullah M Jakfar, 2016).

#### *Peutren Aneuk* Tradition

*Peutren aneuk miet*, the tradition of bringing a baby out of the house for the first time, is a Hindu-influenced ceremony still practiced in Acehnese society today. Deeply rooted in ancestral customs, it marks a key stage in the child's life cycle by introducing the baby to a broader social environment beyond the mother (Diandra, 2021). As the child is weaned and begins to interact with others – like the father, siblings, and community – the ceremony symbolizes this transition. Its main purpose is to seek God's blessings for the baby's ongoing safety and

happiness. Closely tied to the baby's relationship with God, family, and society, the ceremony serves as a hope for the child to build meaningful relationships with their environment in the best possible way, in order to achieve happiness and safety (Fitria, 2012). A central feature of the ceremony is a communal feast shared with neighbors and relatives. This gathering is accompanied by a religious reading, known as *Tahlil Samadiah*, and prayers to Allah for the child's health and well-being throughout their life.

The *peutren aneuk* ceremony is held 44 days after a baby is born and is typically prepared in advance. For the firstborn child, the ceremony is often more elaborate, with the slaughter of a buffalo or cow serving as the main dish for the feast. The significance of the *peutren aneuk* ceremony in the Aceh community is deeply ingrained and encompasses the hope that the child will contribute positively to both their religion and nation. The leader of the *peutren aneuk* ceremony is typically a person of good character and religious knowledge, such as a *Teungku Imam Meunasah* or head of *Dayah* or *Pesantren*. Before the ceremony, the community typically performs a group *Zikir* and prayer for the baby, led by an Imam, and prays for all ancestors who have passed away. Afterward, the guests participate in a communal feast.

This ritual is performed in the early morning before the appearance of the sun. On the day of the ritual, an imam will carry the infant. The infant is then lowered onto the ground while being sheltered by an umbrella, and the child's feet are placed onto the soil (*peugilho tanoh*). Upon reaching the yard (*tanah*), the child's feet are firmly placed onto the soil (*peugilho tanoh*). The infant is then stood upright on the ground, and a religious leader, teacher, or customary leader will recite the following numbers: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, followed by the statement: "*lagee bumoe nyoe teutap, meunan beuteutap pendirian gata*," meaning: just as this earth is firm and upright, so too must your resolve be unwavering (Hadi, 2010).

During this ritual, a coconut is broken over the head of the child while it is being held by four trusted individuals on a white cloth or long piece of fabric (see **Figure 7** below). The coconut water is allowed to splash onto the body of the baby. The broken coconut is then divided, with one half given to the husband's parents and the other half given to the wife's parents, with the intention of keeping both sides united, peaceful, cohesive, and firmly in brotherhood.

Figure 7. The procedure of *peutren aneuk* tradition



Source: Personal Collection of Yuni Saputri, 2023.

After the ceremony, the child is taken into the house, with the parents leading by offering greetings and being greeted and given blessings for the child's happiness. The child is covered with a cloth held by four individuals at each corner of the cloth. After the first stage of the *peutron aneuk* ceremony is performed, the next stage is to take the baby to the grave of their relatives, such as a grandparent who has passed away. This symbolizes introducing the baby to the deceased relatives and hoping for well-being in this world and the next, and for the child to become dutiful.

The notable Hindu influence in the *Peutron Aneuk* ceremony can be seen in the following aspects: 1. Placement of iron or parang under the cradle of the newborn, symbolizing protection against malicious spirits and jin, as the belief in supernatural entities still persists among the Acehnese society. 2. Application of Zimat on the newborn when taken outside the house, with the purpose of keeping it away from the influence of demons. Zimat is also believed to protect the baby from various dangers. Some of the commonly used Zimat by the Acehnese community include "*rante bui*", mystical paper, bullet casings, and necklaces (Fitria, 2012). 3. The *peutron aneuk u tanoh* (descent to earth) ceremony in the Hindu religion falls under the category of Manusa Yadnya, also known as the baby welcoming ceremony (*nyambutin* ceremony). This ceremony is performed when the baby is one hundred and five days old, or three months, with the purpose of purifying the baby. The ceremony also involves naming the baby. In the baby welcoming ceremony, the descent to earth ceremony is also performed with the aim of asking the Earth Goddess (Goddess of the Earth) to accept and protect the baby as it sets foot on the earth (Abdullah M Jakfar, 2016).

The three aforementioned factors are the influence of the Hindu religion in the implementation of the *peutron aneuk* ceremony in Aceh, which still continues to this day. In the Hindu religion, things related to supernatural beings and mystical aspects are considered absolute beliefs. They believe that certain objects have mystical powers that can influence their lives.

#### **4. Conclusion**

The research elaborated that birth rituals in Acehnese society are not peripheral customs but central expressions of cultural and spiritual life. Using analytical data from Spradley's theory, the study details how traditions influenced by Indian culture have been integrated into the local Acehnese context as follows: Through domain analysis, it was found that practices such as *Khanduri* and *Peusijuek* are traditions performed to bless and sanctify other rituals associated with childbirth. *Intat Bu* or *Me Bu* reflects a practice aimed at honoring and nurturing pregnant women, while also serving as a form of social recognition. Meanwhile, *Tanom Adoe* and *Peutreuén Aneuk* constitute a cohesive cultural system designed to welcome and protect new life. These rituals are preserved not only as inherited customs but also function as a means for the community to maintain harmony among individuals, families, and spiritual forces.

Building upon this, taxonomic analysis indicates that each element within the rituals follows an organized structure, from the types of materials used to the

order of their implementation. Within this structure, influences from Indian particularly Hindu culture are evident, such as the symbolic use of water, leaves, earth, and flowers. Moreover, Hindu elements are also reflected in the integrated values and meanings embedded in these traditions. However, these elements were not adopted in their original form; instead, they have undergone a process of syncretism, blending with local customs and Islamic principles to form a uniquely characteristic cultural expression.

Componential analysis sharpens the contrast and convergence between rituals. Hindu cosmology informs symbolic content and metaphysical framing, while Islamic teachings govern intention, prayer, and ethical conduct. This dual structure produces a ritual system that is both devotional and identity-affirming.

The text concludes that contemporary Acehnese culture is a dominant manifestation of Islam built upon a historical legacy of Hindu and Buddhist influence. The transmission of these ancient religious values subsequently became internalized, forming a distinctive cultural structure that encompasses ethical frameworks, arts, architecture, societal organization, traditions and customs. This process of acculturation occurred through several mechanisms: cultural borrowing, modification or loss of traditional practices, reinforcement of existing practices, and the development of new hybrid traditions. This suggests that Islamization in Aceh did not completely eradicate older traditions but rather absorbed and syncretized them. The importance of preserving this cultural heritage is underscored by the local proverb, Hadih Maja: "*Mate aneuk meupat jeurat, gadoh adat pat tamita*" (when a child dies, one knows where the grave is, but when customs are lost, one does not know where to search).

In the context of research, there are methodological challenges, particularly the paucity of primary data and literature regarding the manifest influence of Hindu-Buddhism in Aceh. This scarcity is attributed to the widespread cultural Islamization practices implemented during the period of the Islamic Sultanate in Aceh. Therefore, future research is imperatively required to trace the authentic manifestations of Hindu-Buddhist cultural influence through a cultural archaeology approach. This necessitates the comparative analysis of material cultural objects, including ritual artifacts, structural remains, and iconography on gravestones or daily items, to secure objective, material evidence independent of textual bias. Such evidence is essential for the authentic reconstruction of the complexity of cultural and religious assimilation in Aceh.

### **Conflicts of Interest**

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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