



Samarah: Jurnal Hukum Keluarga dan Hukum Islam
Volume 7 No. 3. November 2023
ISSN: 2549 – 3132; E-ISSN: 2549 – 3167
DOI: 10.22373/sjhk.v7i3.18797

How to Challenge the Life Women Resiliency in Acehese Matrilocal System: Philological and Anthropological Approaches

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Abstract: The matrilocal system has had a positive effect on women in Aceh. This system has enabled them to become more resilient in facing life's challenges for themselves, their families, and their communities. This study is a qualitative study with philological and anthropological approaches used to study Acehese manuscripts that are relevant to the theme of matrilocality. In-depth interviews, manuscript studies, and observations were also conducted to understand matrilocality practices in Aceh, particularly in the Pidie regions. In this way, historical and empirical knowledge of Aceh's matrilocal system is obtained. It was found that the matrilocal system had raised the status enthusiasm and resilience of Acehese women in wading through life as individuals, family members, and part of Acehese society. Philologically, historically, and anthropologically a harmonious life is seen in the matrilocal system, Acehese women make it possible to face life's challenges, such as raising children for a successful life; maintaining good communication with parents, neighbors, and the community; and managing household finances. This diversity of matrilocal traditions can contribute to the status and resilience of women in the Indonesian nation-state.

Keywords: Women resiliency, cultural practice, matrilocal system, matrilocal system, Aceh manuscript, philology and anthropology

|| Submitted: June 24, 2023 || Accepted: August 19, 2023 || Published: August 24, 2023

<http://jurnal.arraniry.ac.id/index.php/samarah>

Abstrak: Sistem matrilocal berdampak positif bagi perempuan di Aceh. Sistem ini memungkinkan mereka menjadi lebih tangguh dalam menghadapi tantangan hidup bagi diri sendiri, keluarga dan komunitas mereka. Tulisan ini berupaya mengkaji kekuatan sistem matrilocal dalam tradisi masyarakat Aceh. Kajian ini merupakan studi kualitatif dengan pendekatan filologis dan antropologis digunakan untuk mengkaji manuskrip Aceh yang relevan dengan tema matrilocalitas. Wawancara mendalam, kajian naskah dan observasi juga dilakukan untuk menelaah praktik matrilocalitas di Aceh, khususnya di wilayah Pidie. Dengan demikian diperoleh pengetahuan historis dan empiris tentang sistem matrilocal Aceh. Ditemukan bahwa sistem matrilocal telah mengangkat status dan semangat dan ketangguhan perempuan Aceh dalam mengarungi kehidupan sebagai individu, anggota keluarga, dan bagian dari masyarakat Aceh. Secara filologis, historis dan antropologis kehidupan yang harmonis terlihat dalam sistem matrilocal, perempuan Aceh memungkinkan menghadapi tantangan hidup, seperti membesarkan anak-anak untuk kehidupan yang sukses; menjaga komunikasi yang baik dengan orang tua, tetangga dan masyarakat; serta mengelola keuangan rumah tangga. Keragaman tradisi matrilocal ini dapat berkontribusi pada status dan ketahanan perempuan di negara-bangsa Indonesia.

Kata Kunci: Ketahanan perempuan, praktik budaya, sistem matrilocal, naskah Aceh, filologi dan antropologi

Introduction

Despite their limited access to the outside world, Acehnese women could be observed to be resilient in their family and community. Historically, they were even known as state leaders and independence fighters.¹ Famous names such as Ratu Tajul Alam Safiyatuddin and Ratu Kamalatuddin were but two female figures who led the Acehnese state in the 18th century against a variety of obstacles.² Similarly, Cut Nyak Dhien and Cut Meutia were staunch independence fighters against the Dutch colonialists in the 19th century. These four women stood tall in the memories of Indonesians to date as a proof of

¹Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje, *De Atjehers* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1893). Mohammad Said, *Aceh Sepanjang Abad*, 2nd ed. (Medan: Waspada, 1981). Amirul Hadi, *Aceh: Sejarah, Budaya, Dan Tradisi* (Jakarta: Yayasan Obor Indonesia, 2010).

² Denys Lombard, *Le Sultanat d'Atjeh Au Temps d'Iskandar Muda, 1607-1636* (Paris: École française d'Extrême-Orient, 1967). Mehmet Ozay, "The Sultanate of Aceh Darussalam As A Constructive Power," *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science* 1, (2011). Ita Syamtasyiah Ahyat, "Muslim Women in Past and Present Governmental Leadership: Case of Rulers of the Sultanate of Aceh and the Fifth President of the Republic of Indonesia," *Journal of Education and Learning (EduLearn)* 8, no. 4 (2014).

Acehnese women's mettle.³

Studies which examined matrilocality in Aceh so far tended to discuss it from the perspectives of prevailing tradition and Acehnese character. According to the first perspective, Acehnese women, especially in Pidie, are required to stay at home with the women's family after marriage to obtain knowledge from their parents in preparation of an independent living in the future.⁴ According to the second perspective, Acehnese women are known to have an unyielding character in the face of challenges. Malahayati, for example, was renowned for her ability mobilize invite *inong balee* (widows) to take up arms against the Dutch.⁵

In terms of approach, matrilocality in Aceh has often been researched sociologically and anthropologically.⁶ In addition to these approaches, this paper contributes to the literature by also employing textual and historical approaches to gain a fuller picture of Aceh's matrilocality. Manuscripts were examined, observations were performed, and interviews were conducted to fulfill this purpose.

In addition, the core question of this paper is how matrilocality could

³ Reni Kumalasari, "Perempuan Aceh Dalam Politik: Kajian Kegigihan Perjuangan Cut Nyak Dhien Dalam Melawan Penjajah Belanda," *Kalam: Jurnal Agama Dan Sosial Humaniora*, (2016). Setyawan Cahya Edi, "Pemikiran Kesetaraan Gender dan Feminisme Amina Wadud tentang Eksistensi Wanita dalam Kajian Hukum Keluarga," *Zawiyah Jurnal Pemikiran Islam*, (2017).

⁴ Fakhriati, "Perempuan Dalam Manuskrip Aceh: Kajian Teks Dan Konteks," *Jumantara*, (2012). Kamaruzzaman Bustamam Ahmad, "Perempuan Aceh Dalam Perspektif Antropologi," *Gender Equality: Internasional Journal of Child and Gender Studies*, (2015). Ismiati, "Eksistensi Aktivistis Perempuan Dalam Mewujudkan Perdamaian Di Aceh," *Jurnal Al-Bayan: Media Kajian Dan Pengembangan Ilmu Dakwah* 22, no. 1 (2016). Fakhriati, "From Konya to Nusantara: Rumi's Sufi Diaspora in Pidie, Aceh, Indonesia," *Jurnal Ilmiah Islam Futura* 20, No. 2 (2020). Abidin Nurdin, "Pembagian Harta Bersama Dan Pemenuhan Hak-Hak Perempuan Di Aceh Menurut Hukum Islam," *El-USRAH: Jurnal Hukum Keluarga* 2, no. 2 (2019).

⁵ Jacqueline Aquino Siapno, *Gender, Islam, Nationalism and the State in Aceh: The Paradox of Power, Co-Optation and Resistance*, *Gender, Islam, Nationalism and the State in Aceh: The Paradox of Power, Co-Optation and Resistance*, (2013). Widia Munira, et. al., "Women's Leadership and Gender Equality in Aceh: A Socio-Historical Perspective," *International Journal of Multicultural and Multireligious Understanding* 5, no. 4 (2018), p. 79. Elsa Clavé, "Silenced Fighters: An Insight into Women Combatants' History in Aceh (17th-20th C.)," *Archipel*, (2014). Deni Sutrisna, "Benteng Inong B Alee Dan Kompleks Makam Laksamana Malahayati Di Kabupaten Aceh Besar," *Berkala Arkeologi Sangkhakala*, (2019).

⁶ Eka Srimulyani, "Islam, Adat, and the State: Matrifocality in Aceh Revisited," *Al-Jami'ah: Journal of Islamic Studies*, (2010). Eka Srimulyani, "Women and Matrimonial Lives in Aceh 'Matrifocal' Society: A Preliminary Survey," *Heritage of Nusantara: International Journal of Religious Literature and Heritage*, (2016). Kamaruzzaman Bustamam Ahmad, "Perempuan Aceh Dalam Perspektif Antropologi," *Gender Equality: Internasional Journal of Child and Gender Studies*, (2015). Silvia Vignato, "Orphans, Victims and Families: An Ethnography of Children in Aceh," *Antropologia*, (2017). Munira, et.al., "Women's Leadership and Gender Equality in Aceh: A Socio-Historical Perspective."

strengthen women's reis in Aceh. There are three aspects to this question: (1) the history of matrilocality in Aceh; (2) the current practice of matrilocality in Aceh; and (3) the implications of matrilocality for Acehnese women and their families. The answers to this question are expected to contribute to gender studies and the resilience of the Indonesian nation and state.

The study of matrilocality is founded on three elements. *First*, the Acehnese tradition of women staying at their parents' house after marriage. Such is the strength of this tradition that it is deemed a disgrace when it is not followed. *Second*, some parents' property passes to their daughters when they are deemed ready to separate themselves from their parents. *Third*, women are protected fully as members of Acehnese society. These three elements have been passed on from generation to generation that they have become the defining character of life among Acehnese women.

Matrilocality

Matrilocality is a familiar concept in studies dealing with familial and marital relations. One of its essence is the residence of a newlywed couple under the same roof or side-by-side with the wife's family.⁷ This practice is more or less influenced by matriarchal power.⁸ However, it could change and develop according to local traditions. A case in China showed that these changes occurred due to the perceived costs and benefits of its practice, as well as the influence of other families' lifestyle in the community.⁹

Post-marital residence is an important aspect of human social organization.¹⁰ In a matrilocal system, there are two possibilities: learning from parents or direct involvement of parents. Matrilocal practices could change

⁷ Rob J. Gruijters and John Ermisch, "Patrilocal, Matrilocal, or Neolocal? Intergenerational Proximity of Married Couples in China," *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 2019; Mohammad Hefni, "Matrilokal Dan Kekuasaan Patriarkat," *Karsa* 2, (2012).

⁸ Hefni, "Matrilokal Dan Kekuasaan Patriarkat.,"; Evaristo Soares, Titi Susilowati Prabawa, and Gatot Sasongko, "Praktek Tradisi Belis Dalam Adat Perkawinan Di Desa Aiteas (Studi Post-Marital Residence Antara Matrilokal Dan Neolokal)," *International Journal of Social Science and Business*, (2020). Hefni, "Matrilokal Dan Kekuasaan Patriarkat."

⁹ Ting Ji et al., "Kinship as a Frequency-Dependent Strategy," *Royal Society Open Science*, (2016).

¹⁰ Václav Hrnčič et al., "Identifying Post-Marital Residence Patterns in Prehistory: A Phylogenetic Comparative Analysis of Dwelling Size," *PLoS ONE*, (2020). Goki Ly et al., "From Matrimonial Practices to Genetic Diversity in Southeast Asian Populations: The Signature of the Matrilineal Puzzle," *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B: Biological Sciences*, (2019).

existing norms both internally and externally.¹¹ Hu & Mu¹² stated that living with the wife's (matrilocal) or the husband's (patrilocal) parents could cause gender inequality, necessitating adaptation to enable a harmonious life for a newlywed couple in the social system.¹³ Such adaptations include adapting residence and lineage patterns to match the social and genetic structure.¹⁴

Women Resiliency

Women are often treated as *second personalities*, objectified and subordinated in a patriarchal socio-cultural dynamics.¹⁵ They are deemed to occupy domestic spaces as opposed to public spaces. When they appear in the latter, they are often discriminated against, treated as if they don't belong.¹⁶ Cultural constructions contribute significantly to marginalizing and limiting women's public access.¹⁷

In contradiction, economic constructions deem women to play a central role in the household as well as the economy.¹⁸ Karwati¹⁹ even stated that women's role is key to alleviating poverty. Scientifically, it is known that the female brain is more complex than the male, enabling them to absorb information five times faster.²⁰ As such, it is necessary to empower women, especially in light

¹¹ Hrnčič et. al., "Identifying Post-Marital Residence Patterns in Prehistory: A Phylogenetic Comparative Analysis of Dwelling Size."

¹² Shu Hu and Zheng Mu, "Extended Gender Inequality? Intergenerational Coresidence and Division of Household Labor," *Social Science Research*, (2021).

¹³ Emmanuel Olatunbosun Benjamin, "Smallholder Agricultural Investment and Productivity under Contract Farming and Customary Tenure System: A Malawian Perspective," *Land*, (2020).

¹⁴ Goki Ly et. al., "Residence Rule Flexibility and Descent Groups Dynamics Shape Uniparental Genetic Diversities in South East Asia," *American Journal of Physical Anthropology*, (2018).

¹⁵ Irina Rafliana et. al., "Tsunami Risk Communication and Management: Contemporary Gaps and Challenges," *International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction* 70 (2022).

¹⁶ Alparslan Nas, "'Women in Mosques': Mapping the Gendered Religious Space through Online Activism," *Feminist Media Studies*, (2021).

¹⁷ Arip Ambulan Panjaitan and Charlyna S. Purba, "Tantangan Yang Dihadapi Perempuan Di Indonesia: Meretas Ketidakadilan Gender," *JURNAL HUKUM MEDIA BHAKTI*, (2020). Irma Surayya Hanum Program Hasmawati, Dahri D., "Ketidakadilan Gender Tokoh Utama Perempuan Dalam Novel Stay With Me Tonight Karya Sofi Meloni," *Jurnal Bahasa, Sastra, Seni Dan Budaya*, (2020).

¹⁸ Sri Henny Indarti, "Peran Perempuan Dalam Pembangunan Masyarakat," *The Indonesian Journal of Public Administration (IJPA)*, (2019).

¹⁹ Lilis Karwati, "Menolak Subordinasi Gender Berdasarkan Pentingnya Peran Perempuan Dalam Pembangunan Nasional Menjelang Bonus Demografi 2035," *Jendela PLS*, (2021).

²⁰ Virginia Bonomo Ed. D., "Brain-Based Learning Theory," *Journal of Education and Human Development*, (2017). Zeenat F Zaidi, "Gender Differences in Human Brain: A Review,"

of Indonesia's National Long-Term Development Plan (*Rencana Pembangunan Jangka Panjang*/RPJP) for the period 2000-2025.

According to Abrar-Ul-Haq et. al.,²¹ Resiliency gives power to the powerless. The dimensions of Resiliency are personal control, identity, joint decision making, and the involvement of other parties.²² There needs to be a top-down power transfer from the powerful to the powerless.²³ In the context of women, women must actively involve in any aspect of life either as actors and agents of change by paying attention to their self-esteem, awareness, level of self-confidence, decision making, or work status in the economy.²⁴ The United Nation has also stated that to realize women's status and gender equality, women need wider access to public economic spaces.²⁵

Women's Status in Manuscripts

Women's status is defined as the degree of access and control women have over material and social resources in the family, community, and society in general.²⁶ In addition, women's status is related to property rights²⁷ as well as the involvement of women in society, which could take place in domestic life, family life, national development, public education and the economy.²⁸ Women's status is considered important for women's achievement, opportunity, participation and role.²⁹ As a concept, women's status is often used interchangeably with other

The Open Anatomy Journal, (2010). Linda A. Bean, Lara Ianov, and Thomas C. Foster, "Estrogen Receptors, the Hippocampus, and Memory," *Neuroscientist* 20, no. 5 (2014), p. 534–45.

²¹ M. Abrar-Ul-Haq, et.al., "The Development of Household Empowerment Index among Rural Household of Pakistan," *Pertanika Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, (2018).

²² Mariela Acuña Mora et al., "Patient Empowerment and Its Correlates in Young Persons with Congenital Heart Disease," *European Journal of Cardiovascular Nursing*, (2019).

²³ Susan W. Chomba et al., "Illusions of Empowerment? Questioning Policy and Practice of Community Forestry in Kenya," *Ecology and Society*, (2015).

²⁴ Mariam A. Soharwardi and Tusawar I. Ahmad, "Dimensions and Determinants of Women Empowerment in Developing Countries," *International Journal of Sustainable Development and Planning*, (2020). Anil Ghanghas, "Empowerment of Women: Concept, Policy Approach and Implications," *International Journal of Law* 4, no. 1 (2018), p. 36–40.

²⁵ Rini Sudarmanti, et. al., "Women's Empowerment: Examining Leadership Communication of Women Entrepreneurs in Indonesia and the USA," *Jurnal Komunikasi: Malaysian Journal of Communication*, (2015). M. Melissa Rojas-Downing et al., "Climate Change and Livestock: Impacts, Adaptation, and Mitigation," *Climate Risk Management*, (2017).

²⁶ Charles Hirschman, "Gender, the Status of Women, and Family Structure in Malaysia," *Malaysian Journal of Economic Studies*, (2016).

²⁷ Nadezda Belyakova and Taisiya Belyakova, "Women's Rights in the Late Russian Empire: The Paradoxes of the Legislative Basis in the Family Sphere," in *Women in Law and Lawmaking in Nineteenth and Twentieth-Century Europe*, (2016).

²⁸ Puji Lestari, "Peranan Dan Status Perempuan Dalam Sistem Sosial," *DIMENSIA*, 2011.

²⁹ Wang Xiaolei et. al., "Rising Women's Status, Modernisation and Persisting Son Preference in China," *Indian Journal of Gender Studies*, (2013).

terms which have equivalent meanings such as women's autonomy, women's dependence, women's rights, and gender inequality. Currently, women's status is clearly increasing, but not sufficiently.³⁰

A number of views, information, and traditions regarding women's status could be found in manuscripts,³¹ such as in *Syair Siti Islam* and *Siti Latifah*. In these manuscripts, women possess rights and responsibilities which have been accorded to them by the community.³² Nasir³³ and Sastrawati³⁴ stated that the interpretation of religious and socio-cultural texts had constructed the meaning of women's identity based on ethnicity and class to promote traditional and noble values. Hence, socio-cultural ties and noble values frame women's status in terms of how women could be involved in private and public life.

Using an anthropological approach, this study examined manuscript and local practice related to matrilocality in Aceh. Philological approach was used to obtain data from the manuscripts, focusing on matriloal knowledge and practice. Pidie was chosen as the research location due its extensive practice of the matriloal system in Aceh. Here, an anthropological approach was used to examine the matriloal practice of the Pidie society. Direct observation was conducted to get a broad picture of the current tradition prevailing in Pidie.

Unstructured interviews were conducted to obtain in-depth information from the informants, who were directed to tell their stories freely according to their experience. The informants were determined through a rigorous selection process with the following criteria. First, they have knowledge of Pidie customs and religions. Second, their family members practice matrilocality. Third, both men and women were interviewed to obtain balanced information.

Five manuscripts were chosen for data collection: (1) *Siti Islam*, kept by the late Ampun Hasballah, a Pidie resident; (2) *Siti Khazanah*, kept at the Centre for Documentation and Information; (3) *Banta Lila*, kept at Indonesian National Library; (4) *Siti Latifah*, kept at the Aceh Museum; (5) *Hikayat Ranto*, kept at the Leiden University Library with the code Or. 8057. For the last manuscript, only the translated copy was examined as the physical copy was inaccessible due to it

³⁰ Kamila Klingorová and Tomáš Havlíček, "Religion and Gender Inequality: The Status of Women in the Societies of World Religions," *Moravian Geographical Reports*, (2015).

³¹ Fakhriati Fakhriati, "Indians Hybrid Communities in Aceh," in *Proceedings of the 9th Asbam International Conference (Archeology, History, & Culture In The Nature of Malay) (ASBAM 2021)*, (2022). Abdilla Mustari, "Perempuan Dalam Struktur Sosial Dan Kultur Hukum Bugis Makassar," *Al-Adl*, (2016).

³² Yulfira Riza et al., "Gender Harmonization In Al Mu'āsharah," *Humanities & Social Sciences Reviews*, (2020). Lestari, "Peranan Dan Status Perempuan Dalam Sistem Sosial."

³³ Muhammad Nasir, "Syariat Islam Dan Ngangkang Style: Mengenal Kearifan Lokal Dan Identitas Perempuan Aceh," *MIQOT*, (2013).

³⁴ Nila Sastrawati, "Relasi Gender Dalam Pengambilan Kebijakan Strategis Partai Pada Partai Islam," *Al Daulah : Jurnal Hukum Pidana Dan Ketatanegaraan*, (2013).

being in a distant foreign country.

The data were analyzed and interpreted to see their relationship in terms of matrilocality. Contextualization and comparison were then made with several other regions in Aceh. Matrilocality has been built and practiced in Acehese society, particularly among those living in Pidie. Pidie's matrilocality concept has three main characters. *First*, there is a tradition of newly married women staying in their parents' homes, with the corollary that newly married women are not allowed to follow their husbands. *Second*, when women separate from their parents and start their own families, they inherit wealth. When their families are considered to be established, parents will give their daughters permission to be completely independent of the nuclear family. Parents would provide them with a sum of money deemed sufficient to keep their daughters and their families out of poverty. *Third*, both their parents and families provide institutional protection for daughters to ensure that they live a secure life. The surrounding family and community have always been fully supportive of this tradition. The following section provides a more detailed explanation of the concepts, practices, and implications of matrilocality.

Customs of Staying at Parent's House after Marriage

Upon being married, a *darabaro* (Pidie term for newlywed wife) is not allowed to leave her parents' house until she is deemed self-sufficient in her family life. She is not allowed to live with the *lintabaro*'s (Pidie term for newlywed husband) family. Instead, the husband must go to live with his wife's family for an indefinite period.

There are three reasons for this practice by the Pidie community. *First*, the Qur'anic verse: Settle in your homes, and do not display yourselves as women did in the days of 'pre-Islamic' ignorance. Establish prayer, pay alms-tax, and obey Allah and His Messenger. Allah only intends to keep 'the causes of' evil away from you and purify you completely, O members of the 'Prophet's' family (Al Ahzab: 33).

The Pidie community believes that according to this verse, the best place for women is home, managing the house for guests wisely and dutifully. Parents should educate their daughters in this guest management. A husband is the ultimate guest who must be served well.

Second, in Acehese tradition, upon marriage a wife is called *prumoh* (house owner) by her husband. *Third*, the wife gets the full protection of her parents and family. These three reasons are interconnected and mutually supportive of each other in Acehese tradition.

Table 1: Status and Duties of Women Living at Homeafter Marriage in Aceh

Status	Duty	Text and translation	Manuscript and page number
Hostess	Manage the house	<i>leumah pikiran putroe intan – ie seumayang jijak tueung lé Cut putroe beut Quru'an – mangat tatôb hatè luka</i> “when thoughts consume the woman – she then takes an ablution. Then she reads the Qur'an – to calm her wounded hearts”.	Siti Islam, p. 41
	Serve the husband	<i>jannatul mar'ah tahta aqdami zaujiha syuruga ureung binoe beuna tapham di yub qadam judô gata</i> “paradise for a woman (wife) is located beneath her husband's feet” <i>bak tuôt beutatém</i> <i>sujud</i> “you [women] must prostrate the husband's knee”.	Siti Latifah p. 5 Siti Islam p. 35
Owner of the House	Take care of the house	<i>Waréh tõe lôn tan lam dônja tjêë dara han peuroemôh tan sekeulian han sapeuë na</i>	Banta Lila p. 3
	Take care of self and children	<i>Aneuk peurumoh hanji ingat</i> “Childrean and wife at home, forgotten by husband who is away”	Hikayat Ranto p. 15
	Obey the husband and parents	<i>Geu kheun suami ubak kamo bak teumpatnya taduek gata. Barang hajat neuyue lake yohna kamo judo gata. Amanat kamoe bek ta ubah bek meuminah bak tempatnyan</i>	Siti Latifah. p. 6

Sources: Manuscripts *Siti Latifah*, *Siti Islam*, *Banta Lila*, and *Hikayat Ranto*, 2019.

From Table 1, two status of women could be seen. *First*, as a host manages her house. *Second*, as an owner who protects her house, educates her children, maintains her honor, and obeys her husband and parents. All these tasks are expected to lead to a harmonious family in which the husband is content and the children are thriving such that they could participate actively in the public sphere.

Hurgronje³⁵ has recorded the tradition of matrilocality in Aceh, especially in Pidie, in the Dutch colonial times. This tradition is still practiced today, especially in rural areas. However, marriages to people of different ethnic groups and the necessity to work outside Pidie or Aceh are slowly changing this tradition. In some cases, parents had to allow their daughters to accompany their husbands

³⁵ Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje, *Aceh: Adat Istiadatnya* (Jakarta Indonesia: Indonesian Netherlands for Islamic Studies, 1996), 241.

to other areas.³⁶

The Aceh matrilineal system influenced family life in two ways. *First*, wives become house owners, their husbands guests in their parents' house. *Second*, men's domain is outside of the house, to the point that they have to migrate out of their village to earn a living for their family. This system naturally provides space for women to nurture their strength both in the home and in the public sphere.

The data from the following manuscript provide a clear picture in this regard. The *Malem Dagang* manuscript states that:

“jak lèh tawoe nibak bunda, ... ka tok geuwoe ubak bunda, lawet lawan teuma dudoe, maté putroe deungön raja mupakat dum uleebalang, putroe sudang geuböh keuraja, Tajoi Alam Sapiyatudin... peutimang nanggroe mat neuraca, hukom pih kreuh nibak dilè, bacut han meu peu meuriba, Nyang mumukah dum geugasi, nyang pancuri geuculek mata, padum lawet dudoe akhe, oh rab mate po teu raja, neutinggai wasiet neuyue gantoe droe peutimang nanggroe Kalamat Cah bèk ta ubah kuseurapa.” (Go home to mother's house, ... upon arrival there, returning later, the king died and the ministers gathered, the princess was appointed queen, Tajul Alam Sapiyatuddin... managed the state, holding power, her law more stringent than before, no mistakes were allowed, many powerful people were bothered, thieves were punished justly, after a while, when the queen almost died, she left a will that says that the state rule according to the *Kalamat* be unchanged to prevent damnation).³⁷

This text contains three main messages about the role of women at home and in the public sphere. *First*, it was stated that if a woman wanted to meet her mother, she should return home. *Second*, Princess Tajul Alam Sapiyatudin was appointed ruler by consensus of state leaders. *Third*, the Princess led the Acehese state successfully, upholding truth and justice.

Property Ownership Rights from Parents (*Peunulang*)

When a married Acehese woman living in her parents' house could be seen to manage her house and her family properly, she is given property (*peunulang*) to be able to live separately from her parents. This property is in the form of a house and paddy field or farm, in exchange for the gold dowry given earlier to the parents by her. The nominal value of the parents' property given to

³⁶ Direct observation in Meunasah Keutapang, Pidie.

³⁷ Voorhoeve, *Catalogue of Acehese Manuscripts in the Library of Leiden University and Other Collections Outside Aceh* (Leiden University Library (Legatum Warnerianum), 1994), p. 43.

her usually exceeds the nominal value of her dowry.³⁸

Peunulang property is given in a variety of ways. In Pidie, it is given entirely to women, exchanged with their dowry as elaborated above. In Aceh Besar, it comes from their share of inheritance, not dowry.³⁹ The difference is due to the varying interpretation of verse 4 of the An-Nisa chapter of the Qur'an. The Acehnese in Pidie understood this verse through the filter of tradition. As a result, the dowry amount here is high.⁴⁰ Another variation is in Singkil of South Aceh, where *peunulang* property is given to men, as women are considered unable to manage it.⁴¹

The *peunulang* property distribution in Pidie strongly influences the survival of women and their families. It enables them to stay with their family even when they have their own house. In the case of marital dispute or divorce, the husband is the one who has to leave the house.⁴² The husband has no right whatsoever to the wife's *peunulang* property.⁴³

Matrilocality as an Institution

In Pidie particularly, and Aceh generally, women are protected institutionally by their family and community. This is based on verse 33 of the An-Nur chapter in the Qur'an which states that women must cover themselves for reasons of modesty and safety. It is stated that women ideally should stay at home to avoid crimes and harm: *leumah thoughts putroe diamond, ie seumayang jijak tueung lé, Cut putroe beut Quru'an – mangat tatôb hatè sore* (when thoughts consume women – she takes an ablution, then reads the Qur'an – to calm her wounded hearts".⁴⁴

In the Hikayat Rantau manuscript, it is stated that a woman is protected by her husband and his family, her parents, and society at large. From her husband, the woman is given full financial support. The husband is expected to earn a living for his wife, children, and parents. In Pidie, it has become a tradition and an institution that husbands seek work outside their village to the north and southeast areas. Her husband's family would give permission for her to live with her parents during this time.

³⁸ Mohd Kalam Daud and Rahmatul Akbar, "Hareuta Peunulang: Protection of Women in Aceh According to Customary and Islamic Law," *Samarah: Jurnal Hukum Keluarga Dan Hukum Islam* 4, No. 1 (2020). Sayuthi Sayuthi and Dedy Sumardi, "Model Penyelesaian Sengketa Waris Dalam Masyarakat Aceh," *Indonesian Journal of Islamic Law and Justice* 1, no. 2 (2021).

³⁹ Interview with IQ, Uleekareng, Aceh Besar, July 2019.

⁴⁰ Interview with MR, Teupin Raya Pidie, January 2018.

⁴¹ Ali Sibra Malisi, "Praktik Pembagian Harta Gono-Gini (Studi Pandangan Ulama Aceh Singkil)," *ULUL ALBAB Jurnal Studi Islam* 14, no. 1 (2013).

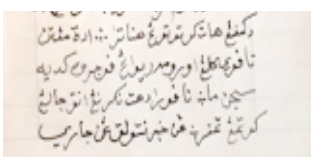
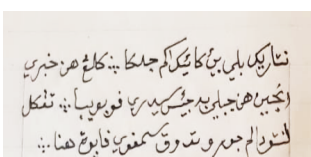
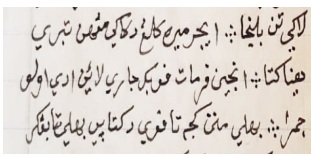
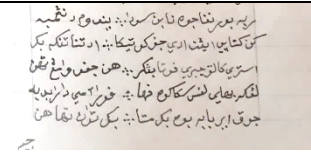
⁴² Interview with TM Geulumpang Minyeuk, Pidie May 2018.

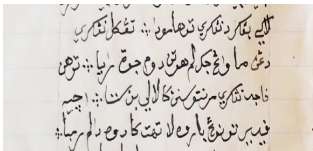
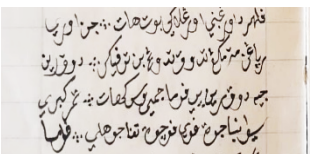
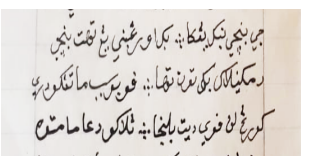
⁴³ Interviews with TY and NJ, Sukon Mesjid, Pidie, May 2018.

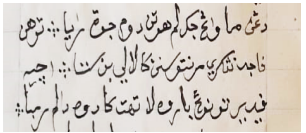
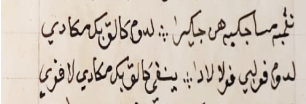
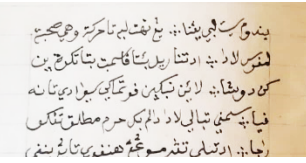
⁴⁴ *Siti Islam* Manuscript, p. 41.

From her parents, the woman is fully supported to stay at their parents' house. Her mother and sister would also encourage her husband to migrate for work. Table 2 summarizes the role played by each party in protecting the woman.

12: The Different Institutional Statuses and Roles That Constitute a Support System for Women in Pidie

Supporting institution	Prevailing tradition	Indicator	Text and translation	Capture and Page
Nuclear family	Need supported by husband	Bringing home bracelet and ring	<i>Meung tan ta puwo gleueng u rumoh, reyoh po jroh sajan po da... Gleueng han jibir euncien han jiblo</i>	 p. 8
			<i>Meuh ngen pirak ureung binoe, lam donya nyo leesoe hawa</i> “If we did not bring home bracelet, they say bracelet was not given ring was not bought for us.”	 p. 9
		Giving red cloth	<i>ija mirah gelang di gaki meuhan tabri hina gata, euncin permata peubak jaro laen adoe ulee jemari</i> (If you do not bring the red cloth and foot ring, you will be hated. Likewise, the ring should be on the wife's finger)	 p. 10
Extended family		Wife, mother-in-law, older brother/sister join in encouraging the husband to migrate	<i>Adakna tapeugah bak isteuri, galak that jibri po tabungka han jipura meung theun langkah</i> (If we tell the wife, the wife will let go her husband to migrate, she will not try to stop him)	 p. 17

	The wife's family	Wife and children at home	<p><i>Kurangan keu ureung lakoe, bungka di nanggroe tuha muda, tinggai nanggroe deungön ma, wang jak lam uteun dum cut raya, (for the husband, in old or new region, the wife safe at the mother's place, you (the husband) should go to the jungle)</i></p>	 <p>p.18</p>
		Wife expecting husband's earnings	<p><i>Jan Uroe raya ngon makmeugang, teuduek teudeng nya di pante poma jimoe rusk ate teuma geubri sie na bacut, puwoe nyak cut tapajoh lee...</i> (When the Ied festivities and the day of megang come, mothers and wives are waiting for the husbands' return from where they have migrated hoping they would bring home some meat form the to enjoy)</p>	 <p>p.20</p>
		Mother and older brother/sister also awaiting their daughter's as well as sister's earnings	<p><i>Ureung binoe yang that banci, demikian lagi bak tuan tuha, peusebab Ma teungku droe kureung lon puwoe mit beulanja</i> (The wife and her mother would hate the husband very much if no money is brought home)</p>	 <p>p. 21</p>

<p>Families of the surroundig community</p>	<p>Tradition for husbands to migrate</p>	<p>Migrating to the northern and southern areas</p>	<p><i>Tuhan peujeut nangroe rantoe, sinankeu laloe manusia. Aceh Pidie tunong baroh, lee that gadoh dalam rimba</i> (God has created the land of migration, there humans are neglectful. Aceh, South and Southeast Pidie they are neglectful in the junge)</p>	 <p>p. 22</p>
		<p>Working hard in the land of migration</p>	<p><i>Ladom galak bak meukeudee ladom peu luebee pula lada...yang that leubeh tahareukat, wahe sahbat Lampoh Lada</i> (Some like to trade, some like to plant chilly, some we give them charity, oh my friend Lampoh Dada).</p>	 <p>p. 7</p>  <p>p. 8</p>

Source: *Hikayat Ranto* Manuscript, 2019.

Table 2 shows how the wife's actor, the husband's mother-in-law, the husband's biological mother, and the husband support one another in order for the daughter and her husband's family to become more stable. Both the wife's domestic responsibilities and the husband's responsibilities outside the home are devoted to the welfare of the family. Institutionally, the assistance is intended to ensure that women and their families have a decent life. Furthermore, institutional support has influenced family politics in two ways that benefit women and their families. The first is the development of a long-lasting and close bond within the family and among their offspring, which tends to foster a stronger sense of sympathy toward the women's families. Because wives live in their parents' homes, their children become acquainted with their family first. Members of the family who assist and communicate with a wife shortly after she has given birth to a child are her biological mother and members of her own family. Communication with the husband's family would begin only after that.⁴⁵ Second,

⁴⁵Direct observations on the AM, MT, and NJ families in Meunasah Keutapang, Sukon Mesjid, Meunasah Ara, and Pidie, 2019.

the relationship with the husband's family has deteriorated. When a husband is forced to leave his wife and children to migrate in order to find work and support his family, he indirectly contributes to his family's estrangement.⁴⁶

From the above results, it could be seen that the matrilineal tradition is maintained in Aceh by three basic principles: (1) adherence to religion; (2) protection of women; (3) requirement of men to migrate for work to earn a living. This tradition is implemented by requiring newlywed Acehnese women to live at their parents' house, and giving them property after they are deemed ready to live independently.

For Indonesia, the tradition is a source of strength as women are deemed to be the source of life. Hence, the position of women in the family is very important and special. Harmony in the family is a source of harmony in society, as the family members could then play their role effectively in public. A similar tradition is the Dewi Sri mythology, the goddess of rice and fertility.⁴⁷

The matrilineal tradition in Pidie has been adapted to suit the current condition,⁴⁸ similar to the matrilineal traditions in the Mekong Delta and Indian Meghalaya regions.⁴⁹ A seemingly capitalist spirit could also be seen in the economic migration demanded by a wife's family to her husbands.

A possible negative effect of the matrilineal tradition is the dependence of a woman upon her family.⁵⁰ However, this dependence is only for a limited amount of time as the woman is actually being prepared by her family to live independently, capable of managing her household by herself as a *preumoh*, as the Acehnese calls her in this state.⁵¹

This study contributes to the literature in at least two ways. *First*, it showed that Islam and tradition are intertwined in the matrilineal tradition of Aceh, with a

⁴⁶ Direct observations of the AM family, MT family, and NJ Meunasah Keutapang, Sukon Mesjid, Meunasah Ara, and Pidie, 2019.

⁴⁷ Rohmana and Ernawati, 151–66; Roy E. Jordaan, "Tara and Nyai Lara Kidul: Images of the Divine Feminine in Java," *Asian Folklore Studies* 56, no. 2 (1997), p. 285.

⁴⁸ Irwan Abdullah, *Konstruksi Dan Reproduksi Kebudayaan* (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2015). Deddy Mulyana, *Cultures and Communication: An Indonesian Scholar's Perspective* (Bandung: Remaja Rosdakarya, 2012).

⁴⁹ S. K. Mishra, "Analysis of Gender Disparity in Meghalaya by Various Types of Composite Indices," *SSRN Electronic Journal*, (2011). Rie Nakamura, "The Cham Muslims in Ninh Thuan Province, Vietnam," *CIAS Discussion Paper No.3: Islam at the Margins: The Muslims of Indochina*, (2008).

⁵⁰ Olatunbosun Benjamin, "Smallholder Agricultural Investment and Productivity under Contract Farming and Customary Tenure System: A Malawian Perspective."

⁵¹ Hurgronje, *De Atjehers*; James T Siegel, *The Rope of God* (University of California Press, 1969).

focus in Pidie.⁵² *Second*, it acts like a contrast with the matrilineal tradition of other regions, such as the Minangkabau region⁵³ in Indonesia, or Indian and African regions historically related to Indonesia, especially Aceh and Pidie.⁵⁴ The matrilineal tradition in these three countries prioritize women over men, boosting their self-confidence and thus self-efficacy,⁵⁵ and in turn their family's health and education.⁵⁶ The women are enabled to deal directly and positively with problems, not avoiding and running away from them.⁵⁷

The matrilineal tradition of Pidie and Aceh is a lesson for the Indonesian nation. A woman is strong and powerful when she is given the opportunity to develop herself through the prevailing traditions.⁵⁸ She and her family could thus contribute their best to the nation in their private and public life.

Conclusion

Instead of weakening women's position and making them dependent on their parents, it could be seen that the matrilineal tradition has enabled women to deal with life's challenges, such as: (1) raising children for a successful life; (2) maintaining good communication with their parents, neighbors and community; as well as (2) managing household finances. They have the time and support they need to grow into all these roles while living with their parents. This research has uncovered the concept of matrilineality both historically and empirically. Data from manuscripts, observation, and interviews were analyzed and integrated to examine the Acehese matrilineal system, especially in the Pidie region. A continuity in the system could be seen, which has enabled Acehese women to perform as private and public roles in the past and the present. Further research

⁵² Hurgronje, *De Atjehers*; Takeshi Ito and Anthony Reid, "From Harbour Autocracies to 'Feudal' Diffusion in Seventeenth-Century Indonesia: The Case of Aceh," *Sydney Studies in Society and Culture* 2, no. 0 (1985).

⁵³ C. W. Watson and Tsuyoshi Kato, "Matriliney and Migration: Evolving Minangkabau Traditions in Indonesia," *Man*, (1983).

⁵⁴ Mishra, "Analysis of Gender Disparity in Meghalaya by Various Types of Composite Indices.," John Stuart Macdonald and Leatrice D. Macdonald, "Transformation of African and Indian Family Traditions in the Southern Caribbean," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 1973; Rusjdi Ali Muhammad and Dedy Sumardi, *Kearifan Tradisional Lokal: Penyerapan Syariat Islam Dalam Hukum Adat Aceh* (Banda Aceh: Dinas Syariat Islam Aceh, 2011).

⁵⁵ Dallen J. Timothy, "Empowerment and Stakeholder Participation in Tourism Destination Communities," in *Tourism, Power and Space*, (2006).

⁵⁶ Pramila Krishnan and Sofya Krutikova, "Non-Cognitive Skill Formation in Poor Neighbourhoods of Urban India," *Labour Economics*, (2013).

⁵⁷ Albert Bandura, "Self-Efficacy: Toward a Unifying Theory of Behavioral Change," *Psychological Review*, 1977. David Wuepper and Travis J. Lybbert, "Perceived Self-Efficacy, Poverty, and Economic Development," *Annual Review of Resource Economics*, (2017).

⁵⁸ Regina Scheyvens and Regina Scheyvens, "Ecotourism and the Empowerment of Local Communities Ecotourism and the Empowerment of Local Communities," *Tourism Management*, (2015).

should be conducted similarly in other regions of Indonesia to uncover their specific matrilineal traditions. The diversity of these matrilineal traditions should and could contribute to women's status and Resiliency in the Indonesian nation-state.

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