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Ceremonial Language and Social Cohesion: An Analysis of *Seumapa* in Acehnese Wedding Traditions

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Abstract

The Seumapa ceremony, a rhyming exchange ritual performed by a Syekh (reciter) representing both the bride's (darabarô) and the bridegroom's (lintôbarô) parties during Acehnese wedding ceremonies before the groom is allowed into the house of Acehnese society in Indonesia, stands as a testament to the role of cultural rituals in capturing and spreading societal values and norms. This study attempts to analyze this ceremony to reveal the social community, practice, and symbolic language within the Acehnese wedding context. It is to further understand how they shape the social cohesion and identity of the Acehnese community. By employing observations on three wedding ceremonies, and interviews with three elders of the community, the analysis of Seumapa's cultural values reveals the ceremony's emphasis on etiquette, respect, social and religious identity, customary knowledge, and educational significance. Ritualistic greetings and gift exchanges portray communal harmony, while symbolic acts like lifting the curtain and presenting 'hantaran' (ceremonial gifts) from the groom to the bride and vice versa represent social identity and mutual responsibility. The integration of religious knowledge depicts the community's prioritization of spiritual preparedness, and the use of symbolic and metaphorical language reflects societal values and aspirations, signifying the importance of wisdom, respect, and communal bonds in preserving Acehnese cultural identity.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The *Seumapa* ceremony, an element of Acehese wedding traditions in Indonesia, embodies the rich cultural and social norms through its distinctive procession of poetic exchange between two *Syekhs* (reciters), each representing the bride and bridegroom's families. This ritual, deeply rooted in the heritage of Aceh Province in Indonesia, serves not merely as a ceremonial formality but as a profound medium for conveying societal values, advice, and blessings in poetic verse. Husni, the Pidie Jaya *Seumapa* Board chairperson in 2022, points out *Seumapa* as a bridge of goodwill and unity between the families, reflective of an ancestral legacy that thrives through its lyrical dialogues (Husni, personal communication, 2022).

However, the academic exploration of *Seumapa* remains scant, with only a few studies investigating its complexities and socio-cultural implications (Harun, 2015; Jaya & Daud, 2017). In drawing parallels, the *Tradisi Buka Palang Pintu* of the Betawi culture emerges as ritualistic kin, sharing similarities in the use of cultural expressions to impart moral teachings and social expectations preceding the matrimonial ceremony (Jamalia, 2014). Such traditions, including *Seumapa*, are important in reinforcing the societal foundation, highlighting the groom's responsibilities towards religious knowledge and familial leadership, articulated through the vernacular poetics and performative arts unique to each culture.

The comparative analysis of Jamalia's (2014), Jaya and Daud's (2018), and Hennilawati's (2019) studies reveal the pivotal role of poetic and performative traditions in matrimonial ceremonies across different cultures, especially in Indonesia, that reflect a shared emphasis on conveying societal norms and values. Jaya and Daud's (2018) examination of the *Melengkan* tradition in Gayonese weddings reveals structural parallels with *Seumapa*, such as an introduction, substance, and conclusion. Both traditions employ lyrical language during the bridal procession, emphasizing poetic expression as a means to convey societal norms and values. This similarity points to a broader cultural practice where traditional poetry in rituals bridges personal and communal settings. Moreover, Hennilawati's (2019) exploration of the *Mangandung* tradition highlights the performative aspects of rituals through expressive mediums like crying and wailing. Like *Seumapa*, *Mangandung* utilizes unique poetic language to articulate societal values and impart wisdom to the bride and groom. This reinforces the integral role of oral traditions in cultural transmission (Pennycook, 2004). There is also the study by Jamalia (2014), who explored the *Tradisi Buka Palang Pintu*, that identifies thematic similarities with *Seumapa*, particularly in emphasizing the groom's moral and religious obligations. Additionally, the inclusion of martial arts in both traditions illustrates the diverse ways cultural expressions and social teachings are intertwined in traditional wedding ceremonies. In brief, these studies illustrate the various nature of wedding traditions, exposing how poetic language and performative elements serve as means for preserving and conveying cultural values and societal norms across different cultural contexts.

The theoretical frameworks of Turner (1969), Geertz (1973), Kertzer (1988), Bell (1997), and Kapferer (2008) provide foundations for analyzing rituals and their roles in society. Turner's (1969) work on social processes and symbolic meanings, extended by Kapferer (2008), focuses on the dynamics and potentialities inherent in rituals. This framework emphasizes the transformative power of rituals, viewing them as critical mechanisms for marking transitions and reaffirming communal bonds. Furthermore, van Gennep's (1960) classic analysis of rites of passage, along with Hockey's (2002) studies, looks into the structural phases of these rituals, highlighting their role in societal development. These phases typically include separation, liminality, and incorporation, each playing an important role in the transformation of individuals within their social contexts. Likewise, Bell's (1997) exploration of the dimensions of ritual provides an understanding of the complex nature of these practices, examining how they capture cultural values and social norms, and foster communal solidarity. Bell's (1997) work complements Geertz's (1973) interpretive approach, which views cultural practices as texts that reveal the fundamental symbolic systems and worldviews of a society. The work by Kertzer (1988), examines the relationship between ritual, politics, and power, focusing on how rituals uphold power dynamics and social order. This perspective highlights the role of social norms that are reinforced and transmitted through ritual and ritualized behaviors that signal intentionality and emotionally bind individuals to group values (Rossano, 2012). These frameworks could also be employed in understanding the *Seumapa* of the Acehnese people and revealing the complex dynamic of social customs, symbolic language, and the interrelation between tradition and individual roles within the Acehnese wedding context.

The scarcity of comprehensive research on *Seumapa* demonstrates a gap in the understanding of its cultural depth and societal implications. This study aims to bridge this gap by providing an in-depth exploration of *Seumapa* within the Pidie Jaya tradition of Acehnese society, emphasizing its ingrained principles and ongoing relevance in its society today. Through this investigation, informed by both local insights and broader anthropological theories, this research contributes to the wide field of studies on cultural rituals.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The examination of *Seumapa* within the context of Acehnese wedding rituals informs an interesting convergence of tradition, culture, and the art of communication through poetic expression. This literature review seeks to detail *Seumapa* by engaging with comparative analyses of similar traditions, reinforced by theoretical frameworks that clarify the ceremonial, communicative, and societal functions of such rituals.

2.1 *Seumapa*

Seumapa is an oral tradition involving the exchange of rhymed verses in wedding ceremonies, and it is one of the traditional arts (oral arts) of Acehnese society in Indonesia. The word *Seumapa* originates from the word *sapa* 'greet', with the addition of the suffix *-eum* (Dianti & Affandi, 2023). When each party of the bride and groom welcomes the arrival of the other party, the groom (*lintôbarô*) and the bride

(*darabarô*) engage in *Seumapa*, an event of exchanging rhymed verses (Sarah et al., 2022). Typically, these verses are embroidered with humorous rhymes and poetry. The oral art of the *Seumapa* tradition is passed down through generations as a medium of communication to convey messages or greetings between the bride and groom. The organization of *Seumapa*, as narrated by Royani (1994), from the welcoming of the *darabarô* as hosts to the complicated exchange of poetic language, displays the ceremony's capacity to blend artistic expression with cultural tradition. This interaction between language and ritual, where poetic forms such as *syair* (*ca'ee*) are central. Each *Seumapa* verse spoken contains educational values that are useful for the community and serve as guidance for the newlyweds in their married life (Dianti & Affandi, 2023; Sarah, et al., 2022). According to Husni (personal communication, 2022), *Seumapa* is not merely a formality but a profound exchange of poetic advice that reflects the community's values and aspirations.

2.2 Components of the *Seumapa* Ceremony

Harun (2015) identifies the essential elements that constitute the *Seumapa* ceremony, emphasizing its structured and poetic nature. The ceremony is marked by the presence of two *Syekhs*, one representing the bride's (*darabarô*) side and the other the groom's (*lintôbarô*) side, who engage in a poetic dialogue that initiates and concludes the ceremony. This dialogue is not merely an exchange of greetings but a deeply symbolic and ritualistic communication that reflects the community's values, wisdom, and blessings.

The role of the *Syekh* in the *Seumapa* ceremony is pivotal. Tasked with reciting the *ca'e*, or poetic verses, the *Syekh* embodies the cultural and spiritual conduit through which the blessings and advice are imparted to the bride and groom. Typically, each side of the two families in the ceremony is represented by its own *Syekh*, ensuring that the dialogue is a balanced and integral part of the proceedings. The *Syekh* are usually men and are dressed in the Acehese traditional costumes.

Syair, or *ca-é*, represents the poetic form central to the *Seumapa* ceremony, characterized by its lyrical structure that can vary from two to twelve lines per stanza, each ending in a rhyming scheme that is meticulously adhered to (Nasir, 2015). This poetic form is not merely for aesthetic pleasure but serves as a vessel for conveying complex concepts such as guidance, religious teachings, love, and moral values through allegorical and metaphorical language.

2.2 The Cultural and Situational Context of Wedding Ceremonies

The interpretation of values and traditions in oral cultures is influenced by context, a concept elaborated by Halliday (2007), who distinguishes between situational and cultural contexts. The situational context refers to the immediate environment in which an utterance takes place, offering clues to its significance. In contrast, the cultural context includes the broader societal norms and practices that shape the meanings of various forms of communication. This distinction is crucial in understanding how specific traditions, such as *Seumapa*, are perceived and enacted within Acehese weddings.

Oral traditions, by their nature, are deeply intertwined with the contexts in which they are performed. The *Seumapa* tradition, for instance, is not merely a set of uttered

poetic verses but a cultural practice steeped in the social, ideological, and philosophical underpinnings of Acehnese society (Agustia, 2018; Hamid, 2021). The ceremony is a manifestation of the community's values, where the role of the bride and groom, their attire, and their actions during the ceremony are all instilled with cultural significance (Hawa et al., 2018).

During the *Seumapa* ceremony, the bride, adorned in a traditional Acehnese dress complete with a bun, as noted by Arby (1989), symbolizes the cultural ideals of beauty and respect. She is instructed to face her parents and perform *sungkem*, kneeling while kissing her hands, as a sign of devotion and respect to her parents and older family members from both sides, demonstrates devotion and gratitude for guidance from birth to marriage, before being joined by the groom. She will also do the same to her parents-in-law. Similarly, this is also done by the groom to his parents and parents-in-law. This ritual stresses the importance of familial blessings and the transition of the bride and groom into their new roles within society (Aziansyah, 2017).

Afterward, the groom, upon receiving blessings from his parents, approaches the bride's home, symbolizing his entry into a new familial and social domain. The exchange of poetic verses between representatives of the bride and groom's families during *Seumapa* emphasized the dialogic nature of this transition, where success in the poetic exchange signifies the harmonious union of the two families (Harun, 2015).



Figure1. The groom's (*lintôbarô*) entourage or escort (photo by Nia Zahara).

The photograph in Figure 1 depicting the families of *lintôbarô* illustrate the communal aspect of the *Seumapa* ceremony. The *lintôbarô*, situated among his family and community members, signifies the collective support for the groom's journey into marriage. The presence of a speaker, holding a microphone, ready to partake in the *Seumapa* on behalf of the *lintôbarô*, highlights the ceremonial importance of voice and verse in negotiating matrimonial alliances. Conversely, Figure 2 shows the *darabarô* and her family prepared to welcome the groom's party, emphasizing the bride's role in bridging both families. The *Syekh*'s presence on the *darabarô* side accentuates the reciprocal nature of the ceremony, where poetic exchanges mark the progression towards the ceremony's finale in unity.



Figure 2. The bride's (*darabarô*) entourage or escort (photo by Nia Zahara).

3. METHODS

This study adopts a descriptive qualitative methodology to explore the cultural significance of the *Seumapa* tradition within wedding ceremonies in the Beurawang community, Meureudu, Pidie Regency in Aceh Province, Indonesia. Emphasizing the poetic language that characterizes *Seumapa*, this research aims to understand the societal value placed on this tradition and its transmission among Acehnese society.

Three weddings were observed during this research. The wedding ceremonies were conducted in Beurawang at three different times. The part where *Seumapa* was done in each ceremony was audio recorded. The verses of the *Seumapa* were then transcribed and translated for further analysis of the social customs, symbolic language, and the interrelationship between tradition and individual roles within the Acehnese wedding context.

From these ceremonies, three informants were selected for interviews. They are one *Syekh*, one parent of the bride and groom, and one *Tuha Peuet* of the Beurawang village. *Tuha Peuet* in Acehnese society refers to revered elders who hold authority and wisdom, often serving as decision-makers and mediators in community affairs. Following Adams (2015), interviews are conducted as structured conversations aimed at eliciting detailed information about the informants' experiences with and perceptions of *Seumapa*. The interview process, as outlined by Creswell (2013), involves identifying participants through purposive sampling, selecting a format and questions to address the research objectives, and ensuring the appropriate use of recording technology to capture the dialogue accurately. Special attention is paid to setting up a conducive environment for the interviews, ensuring privacy, minimal distractions, and the capture of non-verbal cues, which are crucial for a comprehensive understanding of the informants' responses. The three informants were interviewed individually at three different times after the ceremonies were done. The interviews were recorded and transcribed. The questions asked were as follows:

1. What is the meaning of *Seumapa*?
2. What is *Seumapa*'s history?
3. What is the social function?
4. What is the total number of parts?
5. What is the turn-taking method used by *Seumapa*?

6. Does *Seumapa* have any values?
7. How long does it take to complete the process?
8. Do speakers (actors) have any special requirements?
9. Is *Seumapa* used only at weddings?

Drawing on the theoretical frameworks of Turner (1969), Geertz (1973), Kertzer (1988), Bell (1997), and Kapferer (2008), the study examines *Seumapa* as a discursive practice that reflects and influences social and cultural realities. Fairclough's (2003) critical discourse analysis framework was further used to analyze the verses in *Seumapa*. These approaches emphasized the importance of analyzing *Seumapa* not only as a textual entity but also in terms of its production, dissemination, and role within the community.

4. RESULTS

This section presents the findings derived from the qualitative analysis of *Seumapa*'s cultural values in Pidie Jaya wedding ceremonies. The analysis focuses on language as a text, discursive practice, and a form of social practice within the social community of Pidie Jaya.

4.1 Social Community

The analysis identified several core values communicated through *Seumapa* within the social community context. They are etiquette and respect, social and religious identity, customary knowledge, and educational value. Through these findings, it becomes evident that *Seumapa* functions as a significant cultural event that fosters social cohesion, cultural education, and the reinforcement of communal values.

- (1) *Assalamualaikum hay tuan besan*. 'Peace be upon you our new in-laws'

The first greeting is done by the *Syekh* from the groom's party. *Seumapa* procession in Aceh symbolizes profound cultural values of etiquette and respect, particularly evident in the initial greeting of *Assalamualaikum hay tuan besan* 'Peace be upon you our new in-laws'. Rooted in Islamic teachings, this greeting, beyond a mere formality, expresses peace and goodwill towards in-laws, reflecting the communal harmony and respect pivotal in Acehnese society. Hence, the act of greeting everyone promptly, as noted in the *Seumapa*, is not only a mark of a respectful individual but also a reflection of the communal character of the Acehnese people. It serves as a reminder of the communal ties on the importance of acknowledging and respecting those ties through simple yet profound gestures of greeting.

This greeting is then answered by the *Syekh* from the bride's party.

- (2) *Neu cok lintôbarô peutameng leugat, peu saneut siat ngen darabarô*. 'Please escort the groom inside quickly and seat him right next to the bride'
Kadang so lée geuneukée siat, tabèng neu singkap wahée tuan ee. 'Sometimes it's hard to see clearly, so if you could kindly raise the curtain (for our esteemed guests) oh our in-laws'

The verse *Neu cok lintôbarô peutameng leugat, peu saneut siat ngen darabarô* 'Please escort the groom inside quickly and seat him right next to the bride', followed

by *Kadang so lée geuneukée siat, tabèng neu singkap wahée tuan ee* ‘Sometimes it’s hard to see clearly, so if you could kindly raise the curtain (for our esteemed guests) oh our in-laws’, in the *Seumapa* procession is a significant moment showing the Acehese matrimonial tradition. It symbolizes the formal introduction and union of the groom with the bride, representing his readiness for marriage. The act of lifting the curtain (*tabèng*) signifies transparency and communal acknowledgment, with the *darabarô* family’s pride in presenting the *lintôbarô* showing the importance of social and religious identity in Acehese weddings. It further affirms the groom’s integration into the bride’s community and his acceptance of the responsibilities that accompany his new role. Through this act, the groom’s social and religious identity is not only revealed but also celebrated. In Aceh, marriages unite not just individuals but families and communities.

The next verse, is said by the groom’s *Syekh*:

- (3) *Cuman na bacut keu bungong jaroe keu sinyak putroe peunuwo meuba*. ‘Please accept this small gift, which we have brought from afar for the bride-princess’
Na jenda kunéng tubèe meu ôn ngôn ôn selasông yang kamoe ba. ‘We brought this *jenda kuneng* sugarcane with its leaves and the peeled young coconut’
Nyan neu eu ngôn ie raminet geumèe saboh tóng ka geu yue su-ôn bak ureung lingka. ‘Please also take a look at this box full of *raminet* water, which has been brought with great effort by our neighbors’
Laén lom nibak nyan hana peu neu tanyöng ka abéh dum ka rata. ‘Other than that, there’s no need to inquire further; everything is already arranged’

The verse *Cuman na bacut keu bungong jaroe keu sinyak putroe peunuwo meuba* ‘Please accept this small gift, which we have brought from afar for the bride-princess’ along with subsequent lines detailing gifts like *Na jenda kunéng tubèe meu ôn ngôn ôn selasông yang kamoe ba* ‘We brought this *jenda kuneng* sugarcane with its leaves and the peeled young coconut’, reflects the Acehese tradition of presenting *hantaran*, or ceremonial gifts, as a tangible expression of the groom’s commitment and affection. These gifts, ranging from practical to symbolic items, symbolize communal mutuality and the groom’s readiness to fulfill responsibilities towards the bride. Mandated by tradition, the gift-giving ritual not only signifies personal commitment but also fosters social bonds.

Afterward, the bride’s *Syekh* answers the verse with:

- (4) *Tameumat jaroe tanda mulia*. ‘Our handshake is a symbol of mutual respect’
Walau dari jiôh neumelangkah keunoe. ‘Even though you have traveled from afar’
Saba Tungku droeneuh siat di luwa. ‘Please, wait patiently outside for a while, Sir’
Syt meuno adat meuhat saboh droe. ‘This is exactly what our tradition dictates’
Masa saboh droe Tungku dilée sit kana. ‘This tradition has been ours from the past, Sir’
Adat Aceh nyo sinoe ka nyata. ‘The Acehese tradition here is clearly observed’

The stanza *Tameumat jaroe tanda mulia* ‘Our handshake is a symbol of mutual respect’ followed by verses inviting guests to wait outside reflects Acehese hospitality customs and home entry etiquette. This tradition, central to the *Seumapa* ceremony, imparts knowledge of respect and patience. Acknowledging guests’ efforts through *Walau dari jiôh neumelangkah keunoe* ‘Even though you have traveled from afar’, it underscores waiting outside as a respectful gesture, emphasizing patience and social boundaries with *Saba Teungku droeneuh siat di luwa* ‘Please, wait patiently outside for a while’. Waiting until invited inside symbolizes Acehese hospitality,

rooted in Islamic principles of privacy and respect. The custom of presenting *bungong jaroe* as trinkets shows the Acehnese gift-giving traditions, fostering goodwill and reinforcing social bonds between guests and hosts.

The rhyme thus serves as an educational tool, reminding both participants and observers of the enduring values instilled in Acehnese traditions. By emphasizing the importance of etiquette, respect for personal space, and the significance of gift-giving in social interactions, the *Seumapa* ceremony acts as a conduit for the transmission of cultural norms and practices. This ritual not only celebrates the union of the bride and groom but also reaffirms the community's commitment to preserving and observing the customs passed down through generations to ensure the continuity of Acehnese cultural identity.

The next verse is verbalized by the groom's *Syekh*:

- (5) *Menyoe na ureung binoe kön ka neu tuban*. 'You would know how it is when women are around'
Kiban geumeungui pakaian ngen meuröh muka. 'How long it take them to get dressed and put on their makeup'
Bak geu sanggöi ôk troh bak simalam. 'It would take the entire night just to do the hair'
Bak geu lhat subang karap meculok mata. 'And when putting on earrings, it almost poked and hurt their eyes'

The verse *Menyoe na ureung binoe kön ka neu tuban* 'You would know how it is when a woman is around' humorously reflects Acehnese cultural appreciation for aesthetics during weddings. It details careful preparations, emphasizing beauty as respect and honor. The process of dressing and makeup is not just for social obligation but cultural participation, acknowledging the sanctity of weddings. Playfully noting the time and discomfort shows the value placed on presenting oneself with dignity and elegance.

4.2 Social Practice

This section explores the *Seumapa* ceremony's rich social customs, particularly regarding the *lintôbarô*'s integration into the bride's community. It serves as a platform for articulating matrimonial vows and transmitting social values, including the groom's identity, lineage, education, and religious understanding. Emphasizing the groom's religious knowledge reflects Acehnese prioritization of spirituality in marital and societal well-being. Inquiries into his religious practices ensure compatibility and shared values, highlighting his role as a spiritual guardian. Additionally, the tradition of *hantaran* symbolizes the groom's readiness to fulfill responsibilities and contribute to his bride's welfare.

Following this, the ability of the groom to lead a household is inquired by the bride's *Syekh*:

- (6) *Beungöh beungöh Tungku keumang ôn mutoe*. 'Mutoe leaves always bloom in the morning, Sir'
Teungöh cot uroe keumang ôn capa. 'Capa leaf blooms in the midday'
Teuman lintôbarô nyoe ka Tungku puwoe. 'Now you have brought and introduced the groom to us here, Sir'
Peu kaleuh neupeureuno bideung agama? 'Have you taught him the tenets of religion?'

In the *Seumapa* ceremonies, verses like *Beungöh beungöh Tungku keumang ôn mutoe* 'Mutoe leaves always bloom in the morning' and *Teungöh cot uroe keumang*

ôn capa ‘Capa leaf blooms in the midday’ followed by *Teuman lintôbarô nyoe ka Tungku puwoe* ‘Now you have brought and introduced the groom to us here’ culminate in the inquiry *Peu kaleuh neupeureuno bidang agama?* ‘Have you taught him the tenets of religion?’ This stanza emphasizes the importance of religious understanding in the household establishment. The metaphorical reference to *mutoe* and *capa* leaves parallels religious principles guiding life’s phases, including marriage. The inquiry into the groom’s religious education reflects the Acehese belief in a strong religious foundation for family well-being. The groom’s role is as a spiritual leader, aligning with Islamic teachings on harmonious households. This emphasis highlights community involvement in preserving Islamic values and the societal consensus on the role of faith in marital and family life, reinforced by early religious education practices in Acehese society.

To ensure the groom’s knowledge of religion, the bride’s *Syekh* continues by saying:

- (7) *Menyoe bideung agama golom abèh, Tungku.* ‘If the teachings of religion are not yet complete, Sir’
Bek le jinoe Tungku ba. ‘Don’t bring him here, Sir’
Tungku yue jak beut le meu dua lhée uroe. ‘Please ask him to study religion for 2 to 3 days, Sir’
Entreuk barô keunoe lintô Tungku peu gisa. ‘When it’s completed, bring him back here, Sir’

The stanza *Menyoe bideung agama golom abèh, Tungku* ‘If the teachings of religion are not yet complete, Sir’ leading to *Bek le jinoe Tungku ba* ‘Don’t bring him here, Sir’ captures Acehese emphasis on religious education within marriage. The directive for the further verse is, *Tungku yue jak beut le meu dua lhée uroe* ‘Please ask him to study religion for 2 to 3 days, Sir’ pinpoints the expectation of deep religious comprehension before marriage. This dialogue demonstrates the intrinsic link between matrimonial commitments and religious preparedness, prioritizing faith as the foundation of marital life. It acts as a screening mechanism, ensuring spiritual alignment and groom readiness. Marriage is viewed as a sacred covenant extending to spiritual companionship, fostering a harmonious household based on Islamic principles of *sakinah*, *mawaddah*, *warrahmah*. These are three fundamental concepts in Islam, often mentioned in the context of marriage. *Sakinah* signifies tranquility and peace within relationships, *mawaddah* denotes deep love and affection, while *warrahmah* emphasizes compassion and mercy towards one another. Together, these principles represent the ideal foundation for a harmonious and fulfilling marital life. This part of *Seumapa* affirms the community’s dedication to nurturing well-rounded individuals who are not only prepared for the worldly aspects of marriage but are also equipped with the spiritual wisdom necessary to lead a family.

To ensure the bride and her family of the groom, the *Syekh* from the groom’s side answered:

- (8) *Nyoe meunoe Tungku, nyoe tentang agama hana peuneutemanyeng.* ‘You don’t need to ask any more questions if it’s about religion, Sir’
Bakneukira lée droneuh peulintô kamoe meusapeu hanjeut. ‘Do you suppose that the groom is ignorant about religion?’
Bak jiôh di jak beut sidèh di Malaysia. ‘He studied in Malaysia from afar’
Trôh u Arab Saudi keudèh dijak meudagang. ‘He has also worked in Saudi Arabia’

In the *Seumapa* ceremonies, the lines *Nyoe meunoe Tungku, nyoe tentang agama hana peuneutemanyeng* ‘You don’t need to ask any more questions if it’s about religion, Sir’ assertively address any doubts about the groom’s religious knowledge. This is followed by the affirmation of his religious education in Malaysia and Saudi Arabia. This dialogue reveals the community’s emphasis on religious scholarship for marital compatibility, reflecting a collective value system prioritizing religious piety and knowledge. It also reflects the Acehnese cultural practice of asserting family honor, ensuring the groom’s suitability as a spouse and his readiness to assume a spiritual leadership role. It shows the community’s dedication to fostering unions that are grounded in a deep comprehension of Islamic teachings, ensuring that the spiritual well-being of the community and its future generations is preserved and strengthened.

The *Syekh* from the bride’s party then replied:

- (9) *Menyoe meunan, meunoe Tungku meutuah.* ‘If that is the case, Sir’
Nyoe bacut lôn peugah keu lintôbarô yang ka neuba. ‘I want to say something to the groom that you bring’
Ho ka lintôbarô yang di yub paying? ‘Where is the groom under the umbrella?’
Bacut peusan lon keupada gata. ‘Here is some of my advice to you’
Menyoe tapatêh bahagia untông. ‘If you trust me, you will be happy’
Menyo han tapateh kadang binasa. ‘If you do not trust me, you may perish’

In the concluding verses of the *Seumapa* ceremony, the speaker offers wise advice to the groom, emphasizing communal responsibility and individual virtue within Acehnese social practice. The guidance signifies the wisdom, sharing, and communal harmony in the groom’s post-marriage life. The rhetorical query symbolizes the groom’s visibility and accountability to the community, stressing adherence to communal values for personal and collective well-being. The subsequent verses extend the metaphor of sharing and community support, reflecting Acehnese values of generosity and solidarity.

4.3 Symbolism and Metaphors

This section explores the symbolic and metaphorical language of the *Seumapa* ceremony through the wise advice to the bride and groom given by the *Syekhs* from both sides. The *sampiran* of the verses not only adds poetic beauty but also embeds societal values and cultural ethos within Acehnese wedding rituals. Each line carries layers of meaning, reflecting the realities of life, marriage, and community in Aceh.

- (10) *Tubée meu ôn ngön u selason yang kamoe ba.* ‘The sugarcane and coconut that we bring’

This line, invoking the imagery of *Tubée meu ôn ngön u selason yang kamoe ba* ‘The sugarcane and coconut that we bring’, extends beyond the sweetness of the sugar cane or the versatility of the coconut tree. To the Acehnese, the sugarcane symbolizes the sweetness and harmony that the married couple hopes to infuse into their household. The coconut, known for its multipurpose utility, represents the aspiration for the couple to nurture their offspring into individuals who are not only versatile and resilient but also serve as pillars of strength and leadership within their community.

- (11) *Beungöh beungöh Tungku keumang ôn meuto, tingöh cot uroe Tungku keumang ôn capa.* ‘Mutoe leaves always bloom in the morning, Sir, meanwhile capa leaf blooms in the midday, Sir’

The mention *Beungöh beungöh Tungku keumang ôn meuto, tingöh cot uroe Tungku keumang ôn capa* ‘*Mutoe* leaves always bloom in the morning, Sir, meanwhile *capa* leaf blooms in the midday, Sir’ indicates that flowers that bloom at different times of the day serve as a metaphor for the bride and groom’s distinct personalities. Just as these flowers, with their individual blooming cycles, contribute to the beauty of the day in their own times, so do the bride and groom, with their unique traits, enhance each other’s lives. This imagery condenses the hope that, despite their differences, the couple will unite in love and harmony, elevating each other’s existence.

- (12) *Menyoe tapatèh bahagia untông, menyoe han tapatèh kadang binasa.* ‘If you trust me, you will be happy; if you do not trust me, you may perish’

This line presents a clear dichotomy: following guidance leads to happiness and prosperity, while neglecting it may lead to downfall. This reminder in *Seumapa* highlights the importance of heeding wisdom and advice. It reflects the communal belief in the power of guidance and the collective wisdom passed down through generations.

- (13) *Guda busoe, ôn mutoe, ngön ôn capa.* ‘Steel horse, *mutoe* leaves, and *capa* leaves’

The metaphor of the *guda busoe* ‘steel horse’ goes back to an era before modern technology, symbolizing the enduring nature of Acehese customs and traditions. Similarly, the distinct blooming times of *ôn mutoe* and *ôn capa* flowers serve as a touching reminder of the unique attributes each individual brings to a union. Together, these lines and their symbolic language articulate a vision of marriage that is deeply knotted with enduring respect for each other in good and bad times.

The verses below are especially directed to the groom by the *Syekh* from the bride’s party:

- (14) *Malam phôn puwoe sarông ngön halwa.* ‘The first night, bring home a *sarong* and *halwa* (the sweets)’
Malam keudua ungkôt surée. ‘The second night, bring home tuna’
Malam keulhée ungkôt jeunara. ‘The third night, bring home mackerel’
Malam keupeut nyan kajeut surée kumeung. ‘The fourth night, bring home skipjack tuna’
Malam keulimong ungkôt raya. ‘The fifth night, bring home a big fish’
Malam keunam ungkôt keureupôh. ‘The sixth night, bring home the giant trevally’
Malam keutujôh bungkôh ija. ‘The seventh night, bring home a pile of clothing gifts.’
Beu meu aneuk cucoe lagée bak raboe dalam paya. ‘And then you can have many children and grandchildren, just like the kans grass in the swamp’

In the verses above, they detailed the gifts that the groom, or *lintôbarô*, is to bring home over the first seven nights of marriage. From the verse, from the first to the sixth night, the groom is expected to bring home a variety of fish. Aceh is located at the tip of the island of Sumatra and is surrounded by the sea; therefore, fish is an important food in the community. These verses reveal symbolism that is culturally significance to society.

In the first verse, the act of bringing home a *sarong* and sweets on the first night symbolizes the foundational elements of comfort and sweetness in the marital home. The *sarong* is a large, versatile piece of fabric wrapped around the waist as a skirt,

worn by both men and women, often featuring colorful patterns and used for traditional attire or casual clothing. To the Acehnese, it signifies the wrapping of the couple in unity and cultural identity, while *halwa*, a sweet treat, represents the hope for sweetness and joy in their marriage.

The succession of nights with the groom bringing different types of fish symbolizes the provision of sustenance, with each fish representing various qualities and blessings desired in marriage. Tuna and mackerel, known for their strength and resilience, may symbolize the strength of the marital bond. Skipjack tuna and big fish, valued for their size and nourishment, represent abundance and prosperity. The giant trevally, a formidable and respected catch, symbolizes courage and the ability to overcome challenges together.

On the seventh night, the gift of clothing signifies the groom's commitment to care for and provide for his bride's well-being. Clothing, as a basic human necessity, represents the groom's duty to meet the physical needs of his family. Finally, the last line portrays the ultimate blessing and hope for the couple's future: fertility and a prosperous lineage. The metaphor of kans grass, which thrives and multiplies in swamps, highlights the desire for the couple's family to grow with love and commitment.

Meanwhile, the verses in (15) and (16), are especially directed to the bride by the *Syekh* from the groom's party:

- (15) *Lintôbarô pajôh bu lam idang*. 'The food for the husband is placed in a serving dish'
Tabeu ungkôt masèn tarasa keudroe. 'Tasteless and salty fist, that is only for you to taste (and know)'
Bak ureung nanggroë bék ta calitra. 'Do not tell others about it'
Bék peugah peugah bak ureung laèn. 'Do not tell about it to anyone'
Teumakôt di peukhèm malée tuan gata. '(If you tell) your mother-in-law will be shamed'

The verse *Lintôbarô pajôh bu lam idang* 'The food for the husband is placed in a serving dish', progressing through advice on handling domestic challenges discreetly, depicts wisdom on maintaining marital sanctity. *Tabeu ungkôt masèn tarasa keudroe* 'Tasteless and salty fist, that is only for you to taste (and know)' advises enduring minor dissatisfactions privately, symbolized by the salted fish's imperfections. *Bak ureung nanggroë bék ta calitra* 'Do not tell others about it' and *Bék peugah peugah bak ureung laèn* 'Do not tell about it to anyone' stress discretion, safeguarding family dignity and avoiding gossip. Finally *Teumakôt di peukhèm malée tuan gata* '(If you tell) your mother-in-law will be shamed' warns of potential shame to in-laws, emphasizing the interconnectedness of family honor and the importance of respect, privacy, and communal esteem in Acehnese marital ethics.

- (16) *'Oh tameu tutô beuleumah lembôt*. 'When you speak, you have to be gentle'
Sekedar patôt tapeumulia. 'You must honor (each other)'
Kadang po lintô singöh kureung geu puwöe. 'Maybe the groom will not bring much home in the future'
Gata, hay adoe, meubék krot muka. 'You, my sister, do not be grumpy'

The verse *'Oh tameu tutô beuleumah lembôt* 'When you speak, you have to be gentle' is directed towards the bride, emphasizing the importance of gentle communication in the marital relationship. *Sekedar patôt tapeumulia* 'You must honor (each other)' and subsequent lines advise the bride to honor and appreciate her

husband's contributions to their household, fostering mutual respect and appreciation regardless of their size or material value. Hence, this segment of the *Seumapa* ceremony reflects Acehese values of harmony, respect, and gratitude in marriage, emphasizing shared commitment over material wealth and highlighting the bride's role in fostering kindness and appreciation for marital prosperity rooted in understanding, patience, and mutual respect.

5. DISCUSSION

In this section, we discuss the findings derived from the study of *Seumapa* in wedding ceremonies within the Acehese context, particularly focusing on the cultural and social practices and the symbolic language employed. The exploration of these aspects reveals a complex relationship between tradition, social norms, and individual roles within Acehese society, revealing broader themes in the study of cultural anthropology and sociolinguistics.

The advice imparted to the *lintôbarô* and *darabarô* through *Seumapa* verses emphasizes patience, discretion, and mutual respect, reflecting a cultural construct of marriage that values emotional stability and communal harmony. This advice resonates with the concept of social relationships and rituals as mechanisms for resolving social tensions and reinforcing community values (Rossano, 2012; Turner, 1969). The specific references to religious education and adherence highlight the importance of spiritual alignment in Acehese marriages, pointing to the centrality of religion in shaping social institutions and individual roles within the community. This focus on religious foundation aligns with the work of scholars who have explored the significance of Islam in shaping social practices and identity in Indonesian societies (Bowen, 1993; Wartono & Supriyono, 2020).

Moreover, the detailed descriptions of the gifts brought by the groom over the first seven nights of marriage, symbolizing sustenance, prosperity, and communal ties, describe the anthropological understanding of gift exchange as a performative act of social binding (Martynova, 2021). The progression from simple offerings to more substantial gifts reflects an understanding of marriage as a process of mutual engagement and support, reinforcing the Acehese valuation of generosity and reciprocity as foundational to social life.

The ceremonial use of the Acehese language in *Seumapa*, rich in symbolism and metaphor, reflects a profound connection between language and cultural identity. The introductory couplets (*sampiran*) serve not only as a poetic device but also as a medium for conveying social values and communal wisdom. This dual function of language, as both an aesthetic and a didactic tool, aligns with findings from linguistic anthropology, suggesting that the performative aspects of language play a crucial role in the maintenance and transmission of cultural knowledge (Pennycook, 2004). The emphasis on harmonious relationships, communal responsibility, and spiritual guidance within the *Seumapa* verses mirrors the broader Acehese emphasis on societal harmony and religious piety, highlighting the integrative role of ritual language in reinforcing social cohesion (Geertz, 1973; Rossano, 2012).

The emphasis on maintaining familial honor and discretion in handling domestic matters signifies the importance of social reputation and face-saving in Acehese culture. This concern with honor and social perception is related to the analysis of face-

work in everyday interactions (Smith et al., 2021), highlighting the performative nature of social life and the constant negotiation of personal and communal identities. The *Seumapa* ceremony, through its emphasis on speech acts and social dignity, illustrates how cultural rituals serve as the enactment and reinforcement of social norms (Rossano, 2012).

The findings from this study also engage with the broader discourse on the role of tradition in contemporary societies, challenging simplistic contradictions between modernity and tradition. The persistence and adaptability of *Seumapa* ceremonies, as observed in this study, demonstrate the nature of cultural traditions, which evolve in response to changing social realities while preserving core values and practices (Flaut, 2021). This interaction between continuity and change in Acehese wedding traditions reflects broader patterns observed in other societies, where rituals adapt to accommodate new social and economic contexts without losing their symbolic strength (Coyne & Mathers, 2011).

6. CONCLUSION

The analysis of *Seumapa*'s cultural values in Pidie Jaya wedding ceremonies highlights the ceremony's role in emphasizing core values such as etiquette, respect, social and religious identity, customary knowledge, and educational importance within the social community. The ritualistic greetings and gift exchanges underscore communal harmony and respect, while symbolic acts like lifting the curtain and presenting *hantaran* reflect the significance of social identity and mutual responsibility. The integration of religious knowledge, reflected through various inquiries and responses, brings to light the community's prioritization of spiritual preparedness in marriage. Symbolic and metaphorical language in the *Seumapa* ceremony describes societal values and aspirations for the marital union, showing the importance of wisdom, respect, and communal bonds in ensuring the continuity of Acehese cultural identity.

This study has limitations. Its qualitative focus on the *Seumapa* ceremonies in Pidie Jaya may not capture variations across Aceh or among diverse social groups. Emphasizing ceremonial aspects might overlook everyday experiences and the evolving nature of traditions amid modern influences. Future research could adopt a comparative approach to explore variations in wedding rituals across Acehese communities. Longitudinal studies may reveal how these traditions evolve with socio-economic changes and global influences. Ethnographic investigations into participants' perspectives could deepen our understanding of these ceremonies' contemporary significance. Additionally, research could explore intersections of religion, gender roles, and social change, and the impact of digital media and diaspora communities on cultural transmission.

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