

STRENGTHENING THE ROLE OF KEUJRUEN BLANG IN IRRIGATION MANAGEMENT IN NORTH ACEH DISTRICT

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ABSTRACT

The role of Keujruen Blang in Irrigation Management for irrigating farmer's rice fields has been regulated in Aceh Qanun Number 10 of 2008 and the Governor's Regulation. Number 45 of 2015 concerning the Role of Keujruen Blang in Irrigation Management. However, the implementation of Keujruen Blang's role in irrigation management in North Aceh District has not been fully implemented as stipulated in the regulations. This study aims to realize the role of Keujruen Blang in the irrigation management of farmer's rice fields and to scrutinize the strengthening of the role of Keujruen Blang as stipulated in the rules as a traditional institution whose job is to help farmers to obtain water for irrigating their fields. This study used empirical juridical research with a qualitative approach. The main data were collected by interviewing respondents and informants. Secondary data were obtained by reviewing current and related literature. The result shows that the role of Keujruen Blang in irrigation management to irrigate rice fields has not been implemented in accordance with the Qanun and Aceh Governor's Regulation. The obstacles in the implementation of the duties, functions, and authorities of Keujruen Blang among others are Keujruen Blang does not know and fully understand their functions, roles, and authorities yet; poor water discharge management due to limited availability of water discharge; inadequate infrastructure; lack of socialization carried out by the government about the role and function of Keujruen Blang. Therefore, in order to strengthen the role of Keujruen Blang in irrigation management needs to conduct coaching and socializing the duties, functions, and roles of Keujruen Blang in accordance with Qanun and the Governor Regulations; and involve Keujruen Blang in the irrigation management process started from the stage of policy planning, implementation, to supervision so that they can provide recommendations needed by villages regarding irrigation management to irrigate rice fields.

Keywords: Strengthening; Keujruen Blang; Management; Irrigation; Rice Fields
Irrigation; North Aceh

INTRODUCTION

The government has the authority to protect protected areas, while the authorities include the establishment and management of protected areas in provincial cross-river areas, state cross-river areas, and national strategic river areas and regulate, stipulate, and grant permits for the provision, allotment, use, and exploitation of cross-river areas in countries and national strategic river areas (Andi Sri Rezky Wulandari and Anshori Ilyas, 2019). The attitude of community inclusiveness in the utilization of water resources (Nasruddin, et, al, 2020) and ineffective use of water resources are triggers for conflicts of interest in the management of water resources (Ramziati et al., 2020). The form of Iriban local wisdom is a community effort in managing water resources for people's lives, both for household and agricultural purposes (Eppy Yuliani and Megita Aprilina, 2020).

Aceh is a privileged province that has s a legal community unit (Ni Ketut Sari Adnyani, 2021) with special customs (Ikhda Fitria, 2020) and is given special authority to regulate and manage its own government for the interests of the local community in accordance with the laws and regulations of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia affairs (Evi Purnamawati dan Bambang Sugianto, 2022)

Customs in the life of the people of Aceh is something that is still upheld (Nadhia Ayu Sarasvati, et, al, 2021). Customary institutions in Aceh from the past until now have the function and role of fostering cultural values, norms, and customary rules aimed at realizing harmony, order, tranquility, and welfare for the people of Aceh (Aziz, 2018)

In the field of agriculture or rice fields, the Acehnese have a traditional institution called Keujreun Blang (Maulida, et.al., 2018). Keujreun Blang is an institution that regulates activities in the field of rice fields which has the task of determining and coordinating procedures for descending into the fields, regulating the distribution of water to farmers' fields, assisting the government in agriculture, coordinating *khanduri blang* and other ceremonies related to customs in rice farming business, giving warnings or sanctions to farmers who violate the *meugo*

customary rules or not carry out other obligations in the implementation system of traditional rice farming and resolve disputes between farmers related to the implementation of agricultural businesses (Delpita Yanti, 2018).

Irrigation is an effort to provide, regulate, and develop irrigation water to support agriculture. An irrigation system is a unit composed of various components, involving the provision, distribution, management, and regulation of water to increase production in the agricultural sector (Jannate, et.al., 2015). Article 1 point 3 of Governor Regulation Number 46 of 2015 concerning the Establishment of an Irrigation Commission emphasizes that the Keujruen Blang customary institution is part of the Irrigation Commission to support water management in the field of rice fields.

In the management of irrigation water (Sulwan Permana, 2021), Keujreun Blang has several functions, including coordinating the distribution of water between regions, monitoring channels, monitoring water availability, supervising water use, supervising rice field customs, implementing and enforcing rice field customs, and resolving disputes over water use (Mursyidin, et, al, 2023; (Fitri Hindari, 2022).

With regard to the duties and functions of Keujruen Blang, Article 5 of Governor Regulation Number 45 of 2015 concerning the Role of *Keujreun Blang* in irrigation management, is stated, that Keujreun Blang has the following functions: 1. Arrangement of water distribution for farmers; 2. Supervision of water availability for farmers; 3. Supervision of canals and water use by farmers; 4. Settlement of water use disputes between farmers; 5. Supervision of the implementation of the rice field custom in the use of water; and 6. Implementation and enforcement of rice field. This is in accordance with the propriety found in Acehese society (Marlia Sastro, 2022; Andri, 2017; Hastuti, 2021).

Viewed from the importance of the role and function of *Keujruen Blang* in water management for irrigating farmers' fields, it is necessary to pay attention and develop the institution of *Keujruen Blang* custom that exists in every village in Aceh from the government (Darmawan, 2010). However, the fact shows in the

implementation of the role of *Keujruen Blang* in North Aceh District has not been carried out optimally. Based on the phenomena above, it is necessary to conduct research to find out proper solutions. Hence, the main issue which is scrutinized in this study is how to maximize the role of *Keujruen Blang* in irrigation management in North Aceh District.

METHODS

The research method used in this study is an empirical juridical method with a qualitative approach to determine the role of *Keujruen Blang* in structuring irrigation and water distribution for farmers in North Aceh District. The main data for this study are primary data which were obtained through interviews with respondents, namely traditional *Keujruen Blangs*, and the Public Work and Community Housing Service officials. Meanwhile, the informants were selected based on their knowledge, experience, and position related to the role of *Keujruen Blang*. The secondary data for this study were obtained through the current literature review.

This research was conducted in several stages, namely the first stage of preparation and initial data collection for the preparation of a proposal to review the position of *Keujruen Blang* in irrigation management in North Aceh. The first stage is observing the duties and authorities of *Keujruen Blang*. The second stage identifies the data based on the direction of research to be carried out. The third stage is data collection in the field through in-depth interviews technique. The fourth stage is verification and analysis as well as data reduction.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

a. The Role of *Keujruen Blang* in Irrigation Management in Aceh

A customary institution is a customary community organization formed by a certain customary law community that has a certain area and has its own assets and has the right and authority to regulate and manage as well as resolve matters relating to Acehnese customs (Abd. Wahid, 2019). Traditional institutions that

have developed in the lives of Acehnese people from the past until now have an important role in fostering cultural values, customary norms, and rules for realizing security, order, peace, harmony, and welfare for the people of Aceh in accordance with Islamic values.

Article 1 point 22 of Aceh Qanun Number 10 of 2008 concerning Traditional Institutions states that *Keujruen Blang* is the person who leads and regulates activities in the field of rice field business. The position of *Keujruen Blang* is one of the traditional village institutions that helps *Keuchik* in water management in the fields (Andri Kiawan, 2017). In this matter, *Keujruen Blang* is a traditional institution in the village whose task assists *Keuchik* in the field of rice fields.

Article 25 of Qanun Number 10 of 2008 states that, *Keujruen Blang* has the following duties: a. determine and coordinate procedures for descending into the fields; b. regulate the distribution of water to farmers' fields; c. assist the government in agriculture; d. coordinating *khanduri* or other ceremonies related to customs in the paddy farming business; e. giving warnings or sanctions to farmers who violate the customary rules of rice fields or do not carry out other obligations in the system of implementing traditional rice farming; f. resolving disputes between farmers related to the implementation of rice farming business.

Aceh Governor Regulation Number 46 of 2015 concerning the Establishment of the Irrigation Commission which is a coordinating and communication institution between government representatives and representatives of *Keujruen Blang* mentions that *Keujruen Blang* customary institution is a part of the members of the irrigation commission. The tasks of the Irrigation Commission are as follows: 1. Formulate a policy plan to maintain and improve irrigation conditions and functions; 2. Formulate an annual plan for the provision, distribution, and provision of irrigation water for agriculture and other purposes; 3. Recommend priorities for allocation of irrigation management funds through development deliberation forums; 4. Formulate a planting plan that has been prepared by the relevant agency service by taking into account the available

water discharge data in each irrigation area, simultaneous or group water supply, suitability of plant species, plans for distribution and distribution of water; 5. To formulate a plan for maintenance and rehabilitation of irrigation networks which includes priority for provision of funds, priority for maintenance, and priority for rehabilitation; 6. Provide input in the framework of evaluating the management of irrigation assets; 7. Provide consideration and input on the granting of water allocation permits for the expansion of irrigation network service areas and improvement of irrigation networks; 8. Provide input to the Governor regarding the determination of the right to use water for irrigation and the right to use water for irrigation to business entities, social entities or individuals; 9. Discuss and provide considerations in overcoming problems in irrigation areas due to drought, flooding, and other natural disasters; 10. Provide input and consideration in the process of determining the Qanun on Irrigation; 11. Provide input and consideration in an effort to maintain the reliability and sustainability of the irrigation system; and 12. Reporting to the Governor on the results of the program and progress, inputs obtained, as well as reporting on activities carried out during 1 (one) year of activity.

Viewed from the tasks of the irrigation commission described above, it can be seen that representatives of *Keujruen Blang* are as part of the irrigation commission members who are involved in every stage of irrigation management, from policy formulation, implementation, providing recommendations and input, supervision to the reporting stage of annual activities.

In addition, Governor Regulation Number 45 of 2015 concerning the Role of *Keujreun Blang* in Irrigation Management, emphasizes that *Keujreun Blang* is a Customary Institution for the management of rice fields which is a forum for farmers in an irrigation service area and not irrigated area formed by the community democratically (Andri Kiawan, 2017). With regard to the duties and functions of *Keujruen Blang*, Article 5 of Governor Regulation Number 45 of 2015 concerning the Role of *Keujreun Blang* in Irrigation Management, states that *Keujreun Blang* has the following functions: 1. Arrangement of water distribution

for farmers; 2. Supervision of water availability for farmers; 3. Supervision of canals and water use by farmers; 4. Settlement of water use disputes between farmers; 5. Supervision of the implementation of the rice field custom in the use of water; and 6. Implementation and enforcement of traditional rice fields.

Looking at the existing rules in Aceh, the regulation of the role of *Keujruen Blang* has been regulated, both in Aceh Qanun Number 10 of 2008 concerning Customary Institutions, which regulates the overall role of all customary institutions in Aceh, and in the Governor Regulation Number 26 of 2015 concerning the establishment of an Irrigation Commission which includes representatives of *Keujruen Blang* as a member of the irrigation commission, as well as in Governor Regulation Number 45 of 2015 concerning the Role of *Keujreun Blang* in Irrigation Management, which specifically regulates the role of *Keujreun Blang*. However, in reality on the ground, all the roles and participation of *Keujruen Blang* in policy formulation, program formulation and even providing input for irrigation development have not been implemented yet and have not been implemented as stipulated in the existing regulations in Aceh.

b. The Obstacles in the Implementation of *Keujruen Blang*'s roles in Irrigation Management in North Aceh District.

Based on the results of the research there are noticed several obstacles found in the implementation of the roles of *Keujren Blang* in irrigation management for rice field irrigation in North Aceh District, as follows:

1) *Keujruen Blang* does not know the duties, functions and authorities.

The duties, functions and authorities of *Keujreun Blang* are regulated in Qanun of Customary Institutions and Governor Regulation Number 45 of 2015 concerning the Role of *Keujreun Blang* in Irrigation Management. According to Hasan, the persons concerned do not know their duties, functions, and authorities in managing irrigation for rice fields (Hasan, interview, October 7, 2021). Then, according to Zuhri, during he holds the

position of *Keujruen Blang* in the management of rice field irrigation water, he just knows the role of *Keujruen Blang* based on experiences and habits passed down from generation to generation by the previous *Keujruen Blang*. He never reads Qanun about the customary institution and only listens to it in village meetings or during sub-district counseling conducted by the Agriculture Office. Likewise, he also does not know the role of *Keujruen Blang* as stipulated in Aceh Qanun Number 10 of 2008 and Government Regulation Number 45 of 2015 (Zuhri, Interview, October 8, 2021).

2) Poor water discharge management

According to M. Amin, poor water discharge management is caused by limited water discharge in irrigation canals in the dry season to irrigate rice fields, while in the rainy season, abundant water discharge and even floods occur which results in damaged rice or crop failure. This condition happens due to a flood of rice fields in the long term of approximately more than a week rainy session (M. Amin, interview, October 8, 2021).

3) Inadequate infrastructure

According to Bukhari, the availability of inadequate infrastructure is the authority of the central government, provincial government, and district government in irrigation water management. *Keujruen Blang* has no power and authority to provide adequate infrastructure, they just run their functions and roles as stipulated in the regulations (Bukhari, Interview, October 8, 2021).

4) Lack of Socialization

According to Hasan, the government has never socialized the duties, functions, and authorities of *Keujruen Blang* based on Aceh Qanun Number 10 of 2008 concerning Customary Institutions and Governor Regulation Number 45 of 2015 concerning the Role of *Keujreun Blang* in Irrigation Management (Hasan, Interview, October 2021).

The above obstacles in the implementation of *Keujruen Blang*'s roles in irrigation management for farmer's rice fields in North Aceh District need to be resolved promptly to maximize the duties, functions, and authorities of *Keujruen Blang* in irrigation management for farmer's rice fields.

c. Strengthening the Role of *Keujruen Blang* in Irrigation Management for Irrigating Farmer' s Rice Fields in North Aceh District

The efforts to strengthen the role of *Keujruen Blang* should be done to overcome the above obstacles. The efforts to maximize the role of *Keujruen Blang* in irrigation management for irrigating farmer's rice fields in North Aceh District can be done by providing guidance from the government in North Aceh District and by socializing the duties, functions, and roles of the traditional *Keujruen Blang* institution which has been regulated by law. The provisions regulated in Aceh Qanun Number 8 of 2010 concerning Customary Institutions; Aceh Governor Regulation Number 26 of 2015 concerning the Establishment of Irrigation Commission; and Governor Regulation Number 45 of 2015 concerning the role of *Keujruen Blang* in irrigation management in Aceh need to be socialized effectively. According to Jaffar, the preparation of an irrigation program by dividing the authority into the authority of central government, provincial government, and district government needs to be classified clearly so that each level of government can execute its authorities, duties, and functions optimally. If a problem occurs in the community, the team from the district can come directly to the community to see and ask what the community needs. In addition, the efforts made related to the lack of optimization of infrastructure should be always working with the existing resources to gradually rehabilitate the infrastructure to make it better (Jaffar, Interview, October 6, 2021).

To strengthen the role of *Keujruen Blang* in irrigation management and distribution of water for irrigating farmer's fields, the agency in charge of irrigation in carrying out irrigation management activities should involve the

participation of *Keujruen Blang* which manifests itself in initial thinking, decision-making, and implementation of irrigation management activities.

Management planning and implementation activities can be carried out through the results of the joint research using the following processes:

- a) *Keujruen Blang*, together with irrigation management officers conduct research to identify needs, damages, proposed development plans, and improvements for priority scales.
- b) Preparation of the types of work that can be done by *Keujruen Blang*;
- c) The agency in charge of irrigation carries out the management and maintenance of irrigation networks that can be carried out in cooperation with *Keujruen Blang*;
- d) *Keujruen Blang* can participate in the implementation of the maintenance of irrigation networks in the form of labor, materials, or costs according to their capabilities;
- e) *Keujruen Blang* Provides consideration and input on the granting of water allocation permit for the expansion of the irrigation network service area and the improvement of the irrigation network;
- f) *Keujruen Blang* plays an active role in securing irrigation networks.
- g) *Keujruen Blang* can supervise the implementation of maintenance of primary and secondary irrigation networks by submitting reports regularly about the implementation of the service or irrigation manager.

Management and maintenance of irrigation networks is an effort to maintain and secure irrigation networks so that they can always function properly in order to facilitate the implementation of operations and maintain their sustainability through maintenance, repair, prevention, and security activities that are carried out continuously.

The scope of network maintenance activities include an inventory of irrigation network conditions; planning; implementation; monitoring and evaluation. Maintenance planning is made by the Irrigation Management Office (*Balai*) together with *Keujruen Blang* based on the priority plan from the

inventory of irrigation networks. In the maintenance plan, there is a division of tasks between *Keujruen Blang* and the government, including which parts can be handled by *Keujruen Blang* and which parts are handled by the government through a Memorandum of Understanding and good cooperation. Preparation of a maintenance plan includes routine inspections of the irrigation network tracing, identification and analysis of the level of difficulty, measuring and making detailed designs of irrigation network repairs, budget calculation, and preparation of programs and work plans.

CONCLUSION

The role of *Keujruen Blang* in irrigation management to irrigate rice fields has not been fully implemented in accordance with Aceh Qanun and Governor Regulation. The obstacles in the implementation of the duties, functions, and authorities of *Keujruen Blang* among others are *Keujruen Blang* not know and understand its functions, roles, and authorities, poor water discharge management due to limited availability of water discharge, inadequate infrastructure, lack of socialization carried out by the government about the role and function of *Keujruen Blang*. Strengthening the role of *Keujruen Blang* in irrigation management can be done by conducting coaching, socializing the duties, functions, and roles of *Keujruen Blang* in accordance with Qanun and Governor Regulations; and involving *Keujruen Blang* in the irrigation management process starting from the stage of policy planning, implementation, supervision and providing recommendations needed by village regarding irrigation management to irrigate rice fields.

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