

The Existence of Gayo Marriage Culture and Costums in Banda Aceh

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Abstract:

Culture and customs are habits that have prevailed between generation in a society whose existence function as a guideline for thinking and acting in that society. The Gayo community who live in Banda Aceh combines the culture and costums of Gayo marriage with the costoms and culture of Coastal Aceh, so it is necessary to study how its existence continues today. The purpose of this study was to determine the existence of the Gayo marriage customs held in Banda Aceh, identify the stages or processions of the Gayo marriage ceremony, and determine the influence of other cultures on Gayo marriage customs in Banda Aceh. The subjects in this study amounted to 4 people consisting of 3 people who carried out the marriage procession and 1 Gayo traditional leader. The results showed that the stages of the Gayo traditional wedding ceremony procession in Banda Aceh consisted of: the process of pre-wedding activities consisting of 4 parts: *kusik*, *sisu*, *pakok*, and *paden*; wedding preparations are divided into six parts: *risk*, *resék*, *rise*, *kono*, *kite* and *teniron*; the implementation of the marriage is divided into eight parts; *studying*, *giving up*, *bejege*, *mah bai*, *beru*, *ukum* deliberation, *dalem* ceremony and *reckoning mas*. The ceremony after the wedding consists of 2 parts, *mah beru* and *mah kero*. Of all these stages, there are several stages that accompany the Aceh Pesisir wedding customs such as the night of *berinai*, *peusijuk*, exchange of *batil* (betel places), eating *besan* on the day of the reception (eating with the bride's family), *headdresses* and *aisle colors* which tend to be bright colors. The bride and groom have held a traditional Gayo wedding ceremony in Banda Aceh and this happened because of the influence of the culture of the residents with various tribes living in one area.

Keywords: Existence, Gayo Marriage Customs, Banda Aceh

Introduction

Culture is part of life in a society that must be preserved so that it is not lost with technological advances, the era of globalization and the influx of various foreign cultural values. This is in accordance with the law on cultural preservation contained in the UUD 1945 Pasal 32 Ayat 1 No. 5 which is carried out through planning, organizing and courts for the purpose of advancing the nation's civilization and family



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welfare. The Gayo tribe is an ethnic group that inhabits the Gayo highlands of Aceh Province, as the second largest tribe inhabiting the coast in Aceh after the Greet Aceh Regency. The Gayo people live in four districts, namely Central Aceh Regency, Bener Meriah Regency, Gayo Lues Regency and Aceh Tamiang Regency. The Gayo tribe also inhabits several villages in Southeast Aceh District and Serba Jadi District ([Syahra, I., 2017](#)). Furthermore, [Ibrahim, M., \(2007:5\)](#) explained that the Gayo ethnic group came from old Malays who came to Sumatra in the first wave and settled on the estuaries of the Jambo Aye river, the Peureulak river and the Tamiang river. Then down to the watersheds of the rivers that develop into Serba Jadi, Linge and Gayo Lues.

Currently, many Gayo people live and settle in Banda Aceh City. Gayo people still cultivate a number of cultural and artistic values such as the *Didong* and *Guel* dances which are often performed at weddings. In the marriage process, the tribe carries out its own costumes and culture (Gayo customs), but does not follow all the stages and some are combined with the customs where the place is domiciled in Banda Aceh City. The wedding ceremony in Gayo is usually called *Sinte Mungerje* ([Fathanah., Fitriana., & Noer, 2020](#)). This ceremony has characteristic and uniqueness, just like wedding ceremonies in other Aceh District. This wedding ceremony cannot be separated from the elements of costumes, meaning and philosophy of each series, a series of ceremonies. The wedding procession, a series of wedding costumes is an element that cannot be missed. Based on initial survey of several Gayo people in Banda Aceh City, during the wedding procession the Gayo people used Gayo customs and culture, but there were also Gayo people who combined Banda Aceh customs and culture with Gayo cultural customs. The survey was conducted at a wedding in Lamglumpang, Ulee Kareng Village, Banda Aceh. Based on the view that during the Gayo community wedding event in Banda Aceh, there were several stages of customs and culture that were several stages of customs and culture that were not longer carried out, or were still carried out but were no longer in accordance with their original culture. For example, the color of the original Gayo altar is black/dark in color, now it has combined with Acehnese customs with bright colors. The wedding dress along with editing and the traditional ceremony of *eating besan* which is usually after the party takes place, is now done during the party. Similar research conducted ([Gigih, M.A., Adha, M.M. & Suntuoro, 2021](#)) regarding community motivation in carrying out traditional Javanese marriages in Kalibangan Village Lampung, shows that traditional Javanese cultural traditions, are more respected by the surrounding environment with different customs and culture, and get satisfaction because they are carried out in a manner customs that contain meaning. Furthermore, research by [Dalimunthe, A. \(2016\)](#) explains that the existence of the Mandailing Custom in Medan City can be seen from the existence of people who still carry out traditional marriages. The main factor for the Mandailing Batak Community is carrying out traditional marriages in order to maintain this culture and traditions.

Based on this description, it is interesting to study Gayo marriage customs in Banda Aceh City regarding the consistency of holding Gayo wedding cultural customs in Banda Aceh, identify the stages or processions of Gayo wedding ceremonies, and find out the influence of other culture on Gayo wedding customs in Banda Aceh and introduce Gayo wedding ceremonies to the people of the city of Banda Aceh so that this culture is not lost, so that the community and the younger generation can preserve the customs and culture of Gayo marriage.

Methods

The research was conducted in Ulee Kareng District, Banda Aceh City. This research used a qualitative descriptive approach. The subjects in this study were determined by purposive sampling, and sampling was determined by determining the group of informants according to the selected criteria that were relevant to the problem ([Bungin, B. 2011](#)). The subject in this study were 3 wedding venues in Ulee Kareng Banda Aceh, as well as 1 Gayo traditional leader who had extensive knowledge of the traditions of Gayo traditional wedding ceremonies. Data collection techniques to complement research materials through observation, interviews, literature study, and documentation.

Results

Opinion of respondents about the procedure for Gayo traditional marriage ceremonies

According to Respondent TA, the Gayo traditional wedding ceremony is still being carried out by shortening the implementation time. Usually in ancient time it took a long time, but now the time is shortened and none of the Gayo marriages of different ethnicities were common, so in the wedding ceremony the respondent continued to use Gayo marriage customs, he wanted to introduce his native ethnic group to the prospective groom and introduce it to the community. The results of the interview with ZM show that in the area where he lives the wedding ceremony is still being carried out as it should be. It's just that there are those who reduce it and don't do it according to the rules of ancient times. Nowadays, technology is so advanced that people can easily get to know each other via mobile phones. This convenience can lead to the waning of a custom because people sometimes absorb foreign cultures and forget local culture ([Imvarica, F., 2013](#)). But it is undeniable that nowadays life has progressed a lot. As stated by respondent ZM, there are other differences such as time, clothing, and entertainment. In terms of time, in ancient times, weddings could take a long time. Nowadays, this is due to their own busyness or because the work of making the event carried out is shortened or accelerated. Concerning traditional clothing that has changed a lot of due to the progress of the times. Entertainment also changed during wedding receptions. In ancient times, entertainment was in the form of *Didong*, *Guel* and *Canang*. Currently entertainment in the form of modern musical instruments (keyboards). However, *Didong* and *canang* are still performed, only they are not displayed at the reception, but are displayed when cooking food for party preparations. Usually the women in the kitchen do the *muqel canang* (beating the cymbals). Furthermore, interviews with Respondent RN obtained information that the stages of the Gayo traditional wedding ceremony that he knew only in outline were applying, determining the dowry and other request in the form of goods, *berguru* (the event of advising the prospective bride and asking for permission), the marriage ceremony, the reception and *mangan uma berume* (eating with in-laws).

Responses from traditional leaders regarding the procedures for the Gayo wedding ceremony

According to Respondent SY, currently the implementation of traditional ceremonies has changed, both in terms of time of implementation, procedures for implementation, some stages are still being carried out and some are not anymore. At

present the implementation that should be “mandatory” is no longer carried out. For example, when *Berguru* (the gathering of the nuclear family) is no longer done because the bride and groom are of different ethnicities, therefore gathering with the nuclear family only during Eid. If eating with the bride’s family is carried out at the reception. Respondent SY also added that nowadays many brides no longer use traditional wedding ceremonies, brides also do not know the meaning of traditional wedding ceremonies even though there are messages conveyed about life in a household. According to Respondent SY, the stages of carrying out the Gayo traditional wedding ceremony were divided into several stages, namely: 1) *Bersibetehen* (Introduction) consisting of *Munginte* (Applying), *Mujule Mas* (delivering Mas), *Berguru* (listening to advice). 2) The implementation of the marriage consisting of *Mah Bai* (accompanying the groom), *Munyawah Ukum* (marriage contract), ceremony in the palace (bride's room). 3) After the wedding which consists of *Munenes* (taking the bride to move the groom's residence and *Mah kero* (carrying rice). Further interviews with respondent SY, that the Gayo traditional wedding ceremony has undergone changes following the changes of the past before carrying out the process of proposing there is something called *i amal tidur nipi jege* which is meant to see or investigate the prospective bride both in terms of religion, heredity, wealth, and appearance (morals) or also called *Telangke sange* (intermediary/liaison). Currently, it is still being carried out, but unlike in the past, the guardians brought in to see the bride and groom. With changing lifestyles and technological developments, today's bride and groom are acquainted first through telecommunication tools and find out how their potential partners are.

Discussion

Stages of the Gayo wedding ceremony procession and its changes

Proposals are made by the male family or *Telangke* (intermediary) to come to the bride's house. This process is the same as the proposing process in Aceh Besar District. The only difference is that the language in Central Aceh is called *Teulangke*, while in Aceh Besar it is called *Seulangke*. According to (Ulfa, T., Mukhirah, M., & Fitriana, F., 2017) *Seulangke* is a messenger from the family of the prospective groom who acts as a liaison between two families to propose to a girl so that she is willing to be betrothed to the young man she introduces. The *seulangke* did not only play a role at the time of the matchmaking, but until the completion of the wedding ceremony. The process of acquaintanceship is not directly carried out by the two families even though they already know each other, but are assigned to other people who are considered as envoys from the dowry to the implementation of the marriage. The dowry for the Gayo people usually ranges from 10-25 grams of gold, which can be in the form of a necklace, ring or earrings, but this is adjusted by mutual agreement. According to Ismail, B., and Daud, S., (2011:128) the amount of dowry in the Gayo community ranges from 10 to 25 grams of gold. When the request is considered very difficult by the youth, it is attempted through deliberation which is called *besan*. *Berguru* (giving advice), namely giving advice to the bride and groom regarding household life and asking permission (shaking hands) from the father, mother and extended family present. *Berguru* is done the night before the marriage contract takes place. The bride and groom sit on the *Ampang* (small traditional mat) as well as the village head and priest. Apart from establishing friendship, learning events are also a medium for education (giving advice). The aim of the study is to provide provision in the form of advice about marriage, the obligation of husband and wife according to the

provisions of the Islamic religion and customs (Hamda, E.F., 2023). Seating equipment, bride and groom and other equipment can be seen Figure 1, 2, and 3.



(Source: <http://www.docplayer.info>)

Figure 1. *Berguru* equipment and Ampang (traditional mats)



(Source: Hunaifah Hakim)

Figure 2. *Berguru* procession at the groom's residence



(Source: jagaaceh.com)

Figure 3. The procession of *Berguru* at the residence of the prospective bride

Mujule bai (delivering the groom) escorting the groom (*aman mayak*) to the bride's place (*inen manyak*) to carry out the marriage contract. The equipment that is

brought when escorting the groom is *Batil* (a cradle filled with betel gear). [Joni \(2017:72\)](#) reveals that, before the marriage contract is carried out, a *rempele* (bride and groom) is handed over by the *Reje* (village head) carrying a *batil* (cerana containing betel leaves). Furthermore, [Gayo \(2019\)](#) explained that another group headed to the prospective bride's house carrying luggage which was used as *peniron*, in the form of food. Meanwhile, based on the results of interviews with traditional leaders, when *mule bai* (the groom) usually brings fresh fish to be cooked by the bride to be brought back when taking the bride to the groom's house. The reception is usually held after the ceremony is completed and held at the bride's house first. The next day *mujule беру* (delivering the bride) or *inen mayak*, as the bride is called in Gayo. Escorting the bride to the groom's house, bringing the *batil* (cerana) complete with its contents, bringing the *alun* (mat), pillows, chinaware and bringing *kero tum* of which there are 9 packs and 14 packs which are intended to introduce or recognize the guardian of female side. In [\(Joni, 2019\)](#) that, the equipment that is brought at the time of *mujule беру* (delivering the bride) is the *alun* (mat), pillows, crockery and *kero tum* (rice in a package). This is different from the custom of Aceh Besar, where when the bride is brought to the groom's place (*tueng dara baro*) other equipment is brought besides betel and fruit, but what is brought is traditional cakes such as *dodoi* (dodol) *meuseukat* (a typical ceh cake which comes from bread flour and the manufacturing process is almost the same as making *dodol*). In accordance with the opinion of [\(Ulfa, T., Mukhirah, M., & Fitriana, F., 2017\)](#) that, delivery or luggage when delivering the *dara baro* (bride) girl is in the form of cloth suits, prayer equipment, underwear, fruit, cosmetics, canned biscuits, and canned drinks and traditional cakes such as *dodoi* and *meusekat* which are each placed in a tray covered with *sange* and *seuhap* wrappers. *Seuhap* is the cover for the Acehnese traditional wedding talam/hantaran pengantin, or can be used as a cover for the *sange* dish celebration on the maulid [\(Fitriana., Dewi, R., & Rusman., 2021\).](#)

The last process is *mah kero opa ingi* (bringing rice after 4 days) the male's family brings rice and side dishes to the woman's family home with the aim of staying in touch which is also called *mangan ume berume* (meal between in-laws and in-laws). It was said to be four days because in ancient times it was carried out four days after the inauguration ceremony, as time went on bringing the rice was not carried out four days after the event, usually it was brought the next day after the reception was finished at the men's house. Currently there are those who carry out it four days after the event but it returns to their respective families according to the agreement. This is in accordance with the research of [\(Ningsih, I., Mukmin, Z., & Hayati, 2016\)](#) shows that, *mah kero* (bringing rice) the male's family brings side dishes of rice to eat together and stay in touch with the extended family.

The symbolic meaning of special object during the Gayo traditional wedding ceremony

During the process of proposing, there are several object that must be brought, namely *oros senere* (one bamboo rice with a thread snagged at the base and inseted into the tumeric) the meaning is the bearer of the path followed by the thread, *Tenaroh korek sara* (one kichen egg) symbolizes a family discussion about the marry the bride and groom, *jarum berlelinting ku kuning bercucuk ku benang* (a needle with a thread hook at the base and inserted into the turmeric) mean the carrier is followed by the thread, the needles stuck in the tumeric is a prayer and *sen* (money) as necessary wrapped in a white cloth symbolizes sincerity. At the time of *Petaweran* there are some

equipment that is brought, namely *waih* (water) which symbolizes life, cleanliness and purity, *oros* (rice) symbolizes prosperity and livelihood, *batang tenguh* (a plant of a fibrous root type) which are difficult to remove from where they grow, traditional messages symbolize as to strengthen faith in the chest, *bebesi* is a symbol of endurance, *dedingin*, plants which symbolize a peaceful, peaceful and cool household, and finally *celala* in the traditional message of this plant symbolizes the life of people who can adapt to the environment in which they live. The meaning of the *petawaren* (plain flour) ceremony is to ask Allah SWT to bless the bride and her family. The Malay people also use this *tepung tawar* (plain flour) ritual. In the language of the Malay people it is called plain flour pat. Plain flour pats are part of a sacred procession in traditional Malay cultural ceremonies ([Andika, R.J., 2018](#)). Usually carried out at the inauguration of officials or traditional leaders, and circumcision (circumcision), especially at weddings. The process of *tepung tawar* has the same goal of making life easier.

The influence of other cultures on Gayo marriage customs in Banda Aceh

The research result were obtained based on in-depth interviews and observations of three married couples from the Aceh-Gayo tribe. The three couples gave almost the same answers related to the initial stages of the wedding procession that occurred in two individuals of different cultures. For the people of the Aceh Coastal tribe who live in Banda Aceh and its surroundings, they have cultural customs that are not too much different. However, for migrants who have now also settled in Banda Aceh, it takes a long time and stages to be able to adapt the new culture to the culture of origin. Acehnese culture requires that every stage of the wedding procession be carried out properly. Likewise the Gayo people who live in the village of Lamglumpang Ule Kareng, also do not eliminate the series of Acehnese traditional processions. Cultural differences and traditional processions do not make the process of acculturation of two cultures an obstacle. The series of two cultural processions between Aceh and Gayo are currently being held simultaneously without reducing or eliminating one other culture. From the point of view of community marriage, starting from various stages that have been implemented in Gayo wedding customs. In this case the wedding process in Gayo is far different from wedding customs in other areas.

The color of the Gayo aisle is usually dark, but now the color of the aisle and the clothes used by the bride and groom are bright in color because it combines both elements of Aceh Pesisir and Gayo traditional culture. Coastal Aceh clothing uses colored materials (red, green, yellow and black) and in Inland Aceh and Mountain Aceh uses black ([Rahmi., Dewi, R., Nurasiah., Fitriana & Azis, 2021](#)). The combination is often done by combining original Gayo wedding clothes with modified Gayo filigree motifs, headdresses using Aceh Coastal customs. Respondents explained the reason for using Acehnese headdresses because in Banda Aceh it was very rare for MUA (Make-up Artists) to have Gayo headdresses except for original Gayo MUA who only exist in Central Aceh. The process when the groom's entourage arrives is greeted by the bride's family, the first thing to do is exchange umbrellas, then exchanges *batil* (place of betel) and then invite them in. Before entering the house there is a *Tari Guel* (Guel dance is a welcoming dance) and reciprocal rhymes. Next, the bride greets the groom and takes him into the house or dining room with the groom's family. In addition, there are also customs that are no longer carried out due to saving time, costs and energy. After the usual marriage contract, the groom enters the *delem kamar* (bride's room)

to carry out several stages of the traditional ceremony and advice on marriage, but now this is no longer done. *Malam berinai* (the night of carve henna on the hand of the bride and groom) is usually done before the marriage ceremony. In ancient times, henna was usually done at night for three nights. But now the henna night is done during the day or the night of the party for one night because now using instant henna because it is simpler and more practical. In the Gayo tribe, there is usually no henna night. However, because they live in Banda Aceh and are married to Acehnese, the Gayo people who live in Banda Aceh follow the local custom for henna. The henna process is currently not only carried out at wedding ceremonies, but henna has now become one of the fashion trends for the community (Putri, N.S., Dewi, R., & Fitriana, 2017).

Conclusion

The traditional wedding ceremony of the Gayo tribe has a very long process starting from before the wedding ceremony, namely *Munginte*, *Mujule Bai*, *Munyawah Ukum*, *Kamar Delem*, and finally the ceremony after the wedding, namely *Munenes*, *Mah Kero*. All of the ceremonial processes were carried out solemnly by the Gayo people. All the process stages of the wedding ceremony have symbolic meanings from the objects or equipment brought during or after the wedding ceremony is carried out. However, the most important thing is *batil* (a place for betel gear), from a social point of view it is meaningful to establish friendships. The bride and groom who have held a traditional Gayo wedding ceremony in Banda Aceh have indirectly and unknowingly introduced Gayo customs and culture to the people of Aceh/general in the Banda Aceh region.

Suggestion

To the government of Banda Aceh City so that to dig deeper the traditional ceremony process and regional marriage culture in Aceh. The traditional wedding ceremony process has a lot of education that can be conveyed to the wider community. The younger generation rarely feels proud of the traditions that have been passed down from generation by their parents, especially in the Gayo traditional wedding ceremony and understands every process and value contained in the wedding ceremony.

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