



PRESERVING ACEH CULTURE THROUGH *RANUP* MAKING TRAINING: A LOCAL WISDOM-BASED COMMUNITY SERVICE PROGRAM FOR TEENAGE GIRLS

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Abstract

The tradition of ranup seulaseh, or ornamental betel, is one of Aceh's cultural heritage that has a deep philosophical meaning as a symbol of honor, togetherness, and love. However, modernization has led to a cultural shift that threatens its sustainability, especially in urban areas. This article discusses community service activities through training to weave ranup seulaseh in Gampong Blang Pulo, Lhokseumawe, which aims to preserve Acehnese culture while empowering women as the main actors of this tradition. The activity method includes interactive discussions, demonstrations, and practices for making ranup seulaseh. The results showed increased participants' understanding of Acehnese cultural values and the skill of assembling ranup seulaseh as a business opportunity. The participants' enthusiasm showed the potential for preserving this tradition to continue to be inherited. This training supports cultural preservation and contributes to women's economic empowerment. Recommendations were given for implementing further training and developing marketing strategies for local cultural products.

Keywords: *ranup seulaseh, Acehnese culture, tradition preservation, women's empowerment, creative economy*

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is a country rich in culture, including traditions and customs, with unique characteristics in each region. Culture comes from Latin, namely culture and colour, which means cultivating (Cambridge, 2023). Tradition in English comes from the word *traditium*, which means everything that is transmitted and inherited from the past to the present (Literature Review, 2023). Customs are part of the cultural wealth of a region or nation that is used as a guideline in applying attitudes and behaviours for a specific community (Tamam, 2021). Based on the Ministry of Education and Culture (2017), no country in the world has as much cultural heritage as Indonesia has. Each region in Indonesia has a different culture and its uniqueness in terms of traditional food, traditional clothing, musical instruments, regional languages, and others (Irmania et al., 2021). The Acehnese tribe is no exception and has a culture different from that of other regions.

One of the traditions in Aceh that need to be passed on is stringing together *ranup seulaseh* or ornamental betel. *Ranup* means *betel leaf*, used by the people of Aceh as a symbol of a meaningful philosophy and used during traditional activities or events. *Ranup* is served as a form of glorifying guests, also called "*pemulia jamee*". In addition, it is used as a gift during the proposal procession and marriage as a symbol and hope to create a good family relationship between the two parties. Generally, a *ranup* is assembled with a shape that varies according to the creation owned by the couple. When making or assembling is over, parents and young people usually gather. These activities will create friendship and an event for preserving traditions, especially for the younger generation. As time shifted, the tradition of bringing *ranup* as a gift in the procession of proposals

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or marriages slowly changed. Models or deliveries from the groom to the bride are more modern. This phenomenon is becoming increasingly biased in urban areas, so it takes efforts from the community and even academics to preserve the tradition again. The increase in modernity and cultural changes occurring in urban areas are feared to impact other surrounding areas.

One of the efforts that can be made to maintain this tradition is to conduct introduction and training in stringing *ranup*. It is hoped that this activity can reinvigorate the values of the *Ranup Seulaseh* tradition, especially in the younger generation vulnerable to cultural shifts. The benefits of this activity are an effort to preserve Acehese traditions and an opportunity to help improve the family economy. Stringing *ranup* is generally carried out by women. Therefore, this can be associated with women's empowerment activities, especially housewives or adolescents. There should be provisions to help women become productive at home without working formally to help the family economy.

Based on this phenomenon, Gampong Blang Pulo Kec. Muara Satu City, Lhokseumawe City, was chosen as the main focus of the implementation of the activity. Gampong Blang Pulo is among the second most populated after East Batuphat (Statistics, 2023). The community of Gampong Blang Pulo consists of 2542 men and 2554 women who work as housewives on average. In addition to residents, Gampong Blang Pulo is also inhabited by many immigrant people, especially students and students from outside Aceh Province, due to its strategic location with an education centre. Many young women living in the Gampong Blang Pulo area can be an intermediary to introduce and preserve the *ranup* culture.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Ranup

The art of stringing betel (*ranup meususon*) is one of Aceh's cultural heritage and is still a local wisdom. Women usually carry out these activities as the main activity or on the sidelines (Maryana et al., 2023). *Ranup seulaseh* is one of the important elements in the customs and culture of the Acehese people. *Ranup seulaseh* is a type of woven or flower decoration used in various traditional events and ceremonies in Aceh, especially at weddings (Tamam, 2021). Octavia (2021) and Astuti et al. (2023) state that betel leaves are an important element arranged in various motifs and placed in the plan. The assembled *ranup* is used in the bridal procession as a symbol of togetherness, fraternal bonds, and the humility of the bride's family. Puan symbolizes the beauty of ethics and noble morals expected to be reflected in the bride and groom.

Ranup is important in the proposal procession and marriage as a symbol and hopes to create a good family relationship for both parties. In practice, the groom brings several gifts, including traditional cakes such as dodol Aceh, *wajeab*, *meuseukat*, and *halwa*, as well as some clothes, clothing textiles, underwear, a prayer robe, cosmetic tools, and other necessities. In addition, gold and *ranup seulaseh* are the most important parts of the delivery (Yuwita, 2020).

Women's Empowerment

Women have a strategic and productive role in improving the family economy. Women's flexibility in fostering social relations with their social environment creates opportunities for open access to economic resources. However, women's involvement in economic activities is often not equipped with knowledge and skills, and business technical problems make them unable to compete in market competition. In addition, structural problems in government policies related to business development still do not favour women's interests. Micro-business women experience this condition, making them vulnerable to a competitive market that can affect their family's economy (Puspitasari, 2012).

The increase in women's productivity can be seen from indicators that include a change in attitudes that are more positive and advanced, an increase in life skills, and work in the form of



goods and services for the needs of themselves and society (Linda, 2015). Therefore, it can be concluded that women contribute considerably to the household economy.

METHOD

Implementing activities to overcome partner problems is to offer solutions through training in stringing *ranup*. The stages or steps that will be carried out are:

1. Planning stage

Planning involves making initial location observations, selecting partners, and coordinating.

 - a. Observations

The initial stage is to make initial observations in the Lhokseumawe City area. Gampong Blang Pulo chose the results of field observations because there are still only a few residents who can make *ranup hantaran*, so residents who need it must order it from outside the village.
 - b. Partner Selection Stage

At this stage, the partners invited to work together are selected, namely the women's community (mothers and young women). The community of Gampong Blang Pulo consists of 2542 men and 2554 women who work as housewives on average. Gampong Blang Pulo is among the second most populated after East Batuphat (Statistics, 2023).
 - c. Coordination

The next stage is coordination with the Gampong apparatus for licensing, determining the time, place of implementation, the number of training participants, tutors, and equipment and materials used during the activity.
2. Implementation stage

The implementation stages are divided into 3 parts, namely socialization and interactive discussions by tutors, demonstrations and practices together and finally, evaluation of the results that have been done. Here are the steps in detail:

 - a. Socialization and Discussion

The tutor will provide material and interactive discussions with participants during the discussion stage. Participants are allowed to ask questions to the resource persons related to the basic material, namely the philosophy of *ranup seulaseh*, one of the local wisdom of Aceh's cultural heritage that must continue to be preserved by bringing *ranup* to events. The following material motivates women's empowerment through creative efforts to assemble a plan. The tutor explained that this activity could help the household economy and train entrepreneurs for teenagers, especially female students who migrate to Gampong Blang Pulo, by utilizing plants around the house.
 - b. Demonstration and Practice

Next, the tutor will demonstrate how to assemble the *ranup*. For more convenience, participants will be divided into several groups. Assembling *ran up* in this training took an example of a creation characteristic of Aceh, namely the *kupiah meukeutop* model or hat used by Teuku Umar. *Kupiah meukeutop* is a symbol of a leader or king, which means gallant. After the betel string demonstration activity was completed, it was continued with direct practice by the participants.
 - c. Evaluation Stage

The final stage is a feasibility assessment of all participants' creations. Tutors and service committees conducted interviews with all participants to see the level of understanding and identify the difficulties and obstacles faced by the trainees. Furthermore, three of the best works will be selected for award. It is hoped that after this activity takes place, it can provide a better understanding for individuals and communities of the importance of preserving

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regional culture, instilling a sense of love for local wisdom and can be used as a business opportunity to help the family economy.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this section, the stages and results of the activity will be explained as follows:

Implementation stage

The ranup training was attended by 15 participants from residents of Gampong Blang Pulo, Muara Satu District, consisting of several housewives and teenagers. The participants were divided into 3 small groups to facilitate coordination during training. The location of the service was carried out in one of the houses of Blang Pulo residents.

At the discussion stage, the tutor provided material and interactive discussions with the participants and conveyed their knowledge of regional traditions and their meanings. The philosophy of *ranup seulaseh*, one of the local wisdom of Aceh's cultural heritage, must be preserved by bringing *ranup* to events. The following material motivates women's empowerment through creative efforts to assemble a plan. The tutor explained that this activity could help the household economy and train entrepreneurs for teenagers, especially female students who migrate to Gampong Blang Pulo, by utilizing plants around the house. Participants showed a good understanding of the material presented.



Figure 1. Theme of Service Activities



Figure 2. Interactive Discussion

The demonstration and practice carried out by the participants in this activity were to assemble the *kupiah meukeutop* model or hat used by Teuku Umar. *Kupiah meukeutop* symbolises a leader or king, which means gallant. The stages of arranging *ranup* are described as follows:

1. Prepare the banana stem and cut it about 30-50 cm (according to the desired height). The banana stem is placed in the fruit basket and tied on the side with wire to stand upright. The top surface of the basket is then covered with cardboard.
2. Fold the ranup or betel leaf into two parts, then fold the upper left and upper right parts of the betel leaf until it forms a triangle. Next, fold the left and right parts to form a long, tapered top, individually attaching them to the banana stems. After that, it continued to attach a triangular betel leaf covering the front of the banana stem.
3. *Daun sirih* or Betel leaves that have been folded into triangles are attached one by one to the banana stem by arranging them in tiers until they cover the top of the banana stem.
4. Attach the triangular betel leaf to the back in an alternating arrangement until it covers all the backs. Then, take the betel leaves one by one and fold them into two parts.
5. The betel nut that has been folded is pierced in the middle using a needle to cover the upper front of the top with two rows of needles, then cut the betel leaf to cover the top where the banana stem is still visible.
6. For more beautiful and maximum results, decorate with fresh flowers to taste.
7. After the demonstration activity of stringing betel nuts was completed, it was continued with direct practice by the participants.



Figure 3. Participants assemble ranup

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Figure 4. One of the groups of participants compiled a ranup

The final evaluation stage is a feasibility assessment of all participants' creations. Tutors conduct interviews with all participants to see the level of understanding and identify the difficulties and obstacles faced by the trainees. Based on monitoring during the training, participants were enthusiastic during the training. This can be seen during the training; participants are active when there are things they do not understand. Responses from participants stated that this training was very useful for them. Participants also realized that the activity of *meususun ranup* (stringing betel) is not only the responsibility of parents in the countryside, but a tradition that needs to be preserved, especially for the youth of the nation's generation. This awareness motivates them to practice the betel nut process directly, showing their commitment to maintaining the tradition. It is hoped that they can live and apply the material daily.



Figure 5. Participant's creations



Figure 6. Examples of creative projects from Tutors

CLOSING

Conclusion

This activity succeeded in providing understanding to the community, especially young women and housewives in Gampong Blang Pulo, about the importance of preserving Acehnese culture through training in making *ranup seulaseh*. This tradition is not only maintained as a cultural heritage but also as a symbol of the identity of the Acehnese people. In addition, it can also provide participants with skills to take advantage of the making of *ranup* as a business opportunity to help increase family income. That way, this program supports women's empowerment. Participants showed high enthusiasm during the training in discussions and making *ranup*. This reflects the growing awareness of the importance of preserving local culture and hopes to become an agent of tradition preservation involving the younger generation.

Suggestions and Acknowledgments

Based on the results and discussions of this service activity, it can be suggested to the Gampong Blang Pulo apparatus so that in the future, they can facilitate the community, especially the mothers, with other training to improve skills and provide marketing facilities for products produced by the community so that they can improve the economic welfare of the community which will have an impact on national economic stability. Thus, cultural preservation can continue sustainably while strengthening the local economy. Gratitude was also conveyed to tutors, lecturers, village officials of Gampong Blang Pulo and cooperation partners, namely mothers and young women in Gampong Blang Pulo.

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