

Digital Transformation of the Meugang Tradition: Development of an Information System for Cultural Heritage Preservation

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ABSTRAC

This study aims to analyze the role of the Meugang tradition in strengthening social solidarity among the Acehnese people and to conceptualize its relevance as a local wisdom-based Social Sciences (IPS) learning instrument. The research method used is comprehensive library research study, by collecting, reducing, and critically analyzing data from various history and sociology textbooks, as well as reputable scientific journals. The results of the study indicate that the Meugang tradition is not merely a ritual of meat consumption before Ramadan, Eid al-Fitr, and Eid al-Adha, but rather an established social institution that integrates Islamic religiosity, food security, and communal philanthropy. The dynamics of modernization, market capitalization, and the surge in meat commodity prices pose real structural challenges, but local mechanisms such as *meuripee* (group contributions) and *meuraseuki* (sharing of fortune) have proven capable of reducing potential conflict and social class disintegration. The novelty of this research lies in the philosophical reconstruction of the Meugang tradition into the IPS learning curriculum through a prophetic sociology approach. This tradition is transformed from a mere cultural ritual into an applicable pedagogical material to foster the values of organic solidarity, social empathy, and collective awareness of students in the era of digital disruption and modern individualism.

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INTRODUCTION

The Meugang tradition is one of the most solid socio-cultural religious pillars and has been deeply rooted in the identity of the Acehnese civilization since the golden age of the Islamic Sultanate under the leadership of Sultan Iskandar Muda in the 17th century. Historically and genealogically, this tradition began with an official decree from the sultan ordering the registration of the number of poor, orphans, and the underprivileged throughout the kingdom to then be given free beef or buffalo assistance funded directly from the state treasury (Baitul Mal)

as a form of gratitude for welcoming the holy month of Ramadan. However, when pulled into the space and time matrix of 21st-century modernity, this sacred tradition is faced with very complex structural challenges, especially due to the penetration of global market capitalism that triggers the commercialization of livestock and extreme spikes in meat prices in the run-up to the celebration. A crucial problem arises when the unequal economic stratification of society causes some underprivileged groups to experience acute financial difficulties in accessing the meat commodity, which culturally and psychologically can trigger social exclusion, mental burden, decreased self-esteem, and feelings of alienation from their own traditional community if they fail to serve Meugang meat on their family's dining table.

From the perspective of Social Sciences (IPS), particularly development sociology and cultural anthropology, the Meugang cultural phenomenon can be deeply analyzed using the theory of social solidarity proposed by Émile Durkheim, particularly in observing the dynamics of the transition from mechanical solidarity to organic solidarity. Acehnese society, which is now moving towards a modern, heterogeneous, industrial, and urban lifestyle, is surprisingly still able to maintain a very homogeneous and strong form of collective consciousness through the institutionalization of this annual religious ritual. In addition, when viewed from the socio-economic dimension, Meugang represents a real implementation of the concept of "moral economy" initiated by James C. Scott, where people's economic actions are not solely driven by the motive of maximizing financial gain (profit-oriented), but are bound by social norms, reciprocity obligations, and shared subsistence to save each other from starvation. Thus, Meugang functions as a sociological safety valve that holds back the rate of extreme individualism and group egoism that are usually inherent in the structure of modern, capitalist society.

Viewed from the theoretical lens of education, particularly pedagogical reconstruction, Social Studies (IPS) learning in formal schools currently carries a sacred mission to not only transfer cognitive knowledge (transfer of knowledge), but also transform noble character values (transfer of values) to students so that they become democratic, humanistic citizens, and responsive to social reality. However, empirical reality in the field shows an acute symptom where the curriculum and the IPS learning process are often trapped in a textual teaching pattern, memorization of rigid social formulas, and tend to be oriented towards Western sociological theories that are dry about local values (local wisdom). The neglect of the potential of local wisdom such as the Meugang tradition in the classroom causes a wide conceptual gap between the theoretical material learned by students and the empirical-cultural experiences they experience daily in their family and community structures. Therefore, a methodological breakthrough is needed in social studies education through a contextual learning strategy (Contextual Teaching and Learning) that utilizes the Meugang social institution as an authentic social laboratory to teach the concepts of interaction, integration, and conflict resolution in a down-to-earth manner.

If we examine the map of academic literature and the results of previous research conducted by historians and cultural experts, studies on the Meugang tradition are generally still very much dominated by the perspective of pure romantic historical writing, analysis of the

theological-normative aspects of Islamic jurisprudence, or macroeconomic studies regarding its impact on the rate of regional inflation due to spikes in food prices. The fundamental difference (gap analysis) and novelty offered in this study compared to other scientific works lies in the focus of multidimensional scientific integration, which specifically connects the mechanical resilience of social solidarity at the grassroots level with the reconstruction of the social studies education curriculum based on prophetic sociology. This research does not merely stagnate in the documentation of cultural exoticism or romantic narratives of past history, but rather goes far forward by formulating a concrete pedagogical model that transforms the prophetic values of Meugang—such as humanization, liberation, and transcendence—into indicators of modern social studies learning outcomes. Through this new orientation, the Meugang tradition is repositioned no longer as a consumptive domestic ritual, but rather as a strategic instrument of public moral education in warding off the storm of cultural disruption and the degradation of national character in the global era.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research was designed using a descriptive-analytical library research method with a qualitative-interpretive approach to deeply analyze texts, documents, and manuscripts. The main (primary) and supporting (secondary) data sources in this research were obtained from a systematic search of classical and contemporary sociology textbooks, Acehese historical chronicle manuscripts, anthropological research reports, and articles from reputable national (Sinta) and international (Scopus) scientific journals containing keywords related to the Meugang tradition, social solidarity, and the social studies education curriculum. The data collection tools relied on in this library research include documentation sheets, content analysis guides, and the use of reference management software such as Mendeley and Zotero which function to organize, classify, and filter literature based on thematic categories that are in sync with the problem formulation. Data analysis was carried out in a circular manner through four rigid and reliable stages, including library data collection, data reduction (eliminating irrelevant manuscripts), narrative-tabular data presentation (data display), and drawing logical conclusions whose validity was validated using library source triangulation techniques and peer-reviewing.

The data population in this library research includes the entire treasure trove of academic manuscripts, cultural policy documents, history textbooks, and scientific journal articles produced and published within a relevant timeframe regarding the socio-religious dynamics of Acehese society. The locational boundaries of the cultural phenomena that are the object of study in these literatures are centered on the socio-cultural behavior patterns of communities residing in the administrative area of Aceh Province, by taking representative literature data samples from the characteristics of coastal Acehese communities (such as Pidie, North Aceh, and Aceh Besar) as well as inland/mountainous Acehese communities (such as Gayo Lues and Central Aceh). The entire series of scientific activities, starting from the idea formulation stage, bibliographic tracking in various digital databases (such as Google Scholar, ScienceDirect, and Garuda), critical reading, preparation of the synthesis draft, to the finalization of the writing of this scientific article were completed intensively and systematically over a period of six months,

starting from January to June 2026. Through the determination of these strict spatial and temporal boundaries, the compilation of data presented in this article is guaranteed to have a very high degree of factual accuracy, conceptual actuality, and scientific accountability.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research Results

Based on the results of an in-depth textual analysis of various historical and sociological documents regarding customary institutions in the northern Sumatra region, strong empirical data was found that the Meugang tradition functions effectively as an instrument for structural conflict resolution and a major catalyst in re-gluing social cleavage triggered by economic income differentiation. When the momentum of Meugang day arrives, all forms of social stratification, differences in local political factions, and class egoism seem to experience decay and fusion (cultural melting pot) into a single space of equal cultural awareness.

To map how the sociocultural values of the Meugang tradition work and how its formulation can be transformed into the structure of the formal education curriculum, the following is a comprehensive data matrix resulting from literature reduction:

Table 1. Matrix of Transformation of Meugang Tradition Values in Strengthening Social Solidarity and Relevance of Social Studies Learning Curriculum

Dimensional Analysis	Cultural Phenomenon (Meugang)	Impact on Social Solidarity (Literature Study)	Relevance and Integration in Social Studies Learning Materials	Student Character Achievement Indicators (Educational Output)
Religion & Cultural Anthropology	The ritual of slaughtering large livestock (cows/buffaloes) en masse 1-2 days before the holy month of Ramadan and Eid al-Fitr.	Strengthening kinship ties, raising collective awareness based on Islamic theology, and preserving the nation's collective memory.	Material: "Cultural Diversity and Local Wisdom Values in Indonesia" (Social Studies Subject Grade VII/VIII).	Cultivating an inclusive attitude of religiosity, cultural tolerance, and pride in local identity.

Moral Economy & Philanthropy	The practice of the meuraseuki tradition (distributing sacrificial meat/giving it for free to the poor) and the meuripee system (collective contributions from residents).	Reducing social class reflection, slowing the rate of economic exclusion, and activating a social safety net based on communal social capital.	Material: "Actions, Motives, and Economic Principles in Fulfilling Human Life Needs" (Social Studies Subject Grade VII).	Talking about the spirit of philanthropy, high social empathy, concern for poverty, and anti-individualism.
Sociology & Social Structure	Mutual cooperation activities include cleaning the village, preparing the slaughterhouse, and cooking meat with the extended family.	Transforming rigid mechanical solidarity into adaptive, dynamic and functional organic solidarity towards modernity.	Material: "Forms of Social Interaction, Social Institutions, and Social Integration Processes" (Social Studies Subject Grade VIII).	Provides collaboration skills, interpersonal communication skills, and conflict resolution skills.
Prophetic Pedagogy	The process of passing on cultural values (transmission of values between generations) from the older generation (parents/traditional leaders) to the younger generation.	Maintaining the sustainability of social structures from the threat of social anomie (anomie) and cultural disorientation due to the strong currents of globalization.	Material: "Socio-Cultural Change and Globalization in Maintaining the Nation's Existence" (Social Studies Subject Grade IX).	Forming prophetic sociological characters: Humanization (humanizing others), Liberation (free from social barriers), and Transcendence.

DISCUSSION

1. Meugang as a Social Glue for Acehnese Society in the Era of Disruption

A theoretical sociological analysis of literature data shows that the Meugang tradition empirically acts as a highly effective social glue in bridging the intense socioeconomic class divide in contemporary Acehnese society. Referring to Robert Putnam's fundamental thesis on social capital, an adaptive cultural tradition must possess two main dimensions of strength, namely internal bonding networks (bonding social capital) and external bridging

networks (bridging social capital). In the Meugang rite, the bonding phenomenon is clearly manifested within the institution of the nuclear family and the extended family, where there is an unwritten cultural imperative that obliges all family members who migrate to carry out the homecoming ritual known as woe meugang (returning Meugang) in order to gather, cook, and eat meat dishes together under one roof of the parents' house. This emotional familial bond revitalizes kinship relationships that had been strained due to the busy work activities in the modern, mechanistic world.

Meanwhile, the bridging dimension of social capital operates dynamically when elements of society with accumulated capital or excess financial wealth voluntarily share their best Meugang meat packages with neighbors, the poor, and daily laborers in their neighborhood through a local philanthropic scheme called *meuraseuki*. This act of distribution sociologically succeeds in breaking the chain of social exclusion and dampening the potential for class jealousy that easily erupts during religious holidays. Amidst the rapid pace of digital disruption that tends to erode face-to-face interactions and replace them with pseudo-interactions on social media, the Meugang celebration forces each individual to step directly into the realm of public space. The communal slaughtering procession, carried out on riverbanks or village fields, demands intensive communication, negotiation, and the development of mutual trust (social trust) between generations and between different professional groups, thus renewing what Durkheim called the collective consciousness of society.

2. Communal Economic Resilience (Moral Economic) Against the Pressures of Market Capitalism

One of the crucial social issues consistently studied in various political-economic literature in Aceh is the annual phenomenon of a sharp spike in fresh beef prices, which skyrocket beyond the limits of market economic normality ahead of Meugang. This phenomenon is triggered by high information asymmetry and a demand shock exploited by meat speculators. For economically vulnerable (poor) communities, this market anomaly represents a form of structural violence that is poised to oust them from cultural participation. However, the findings of this literature review convincingly demonstrate the existence of an extraordinary level of communal economic resilience through the activation of traditional social coping strategies passed down through generations. One of the most dominant economic defense instruments is the *meuripee* system, a practice in which a group of residents (ranging from 10 to 20 people) organizes themselves to collect monthly contributions well in advance of Ramadan, which are then used to purchase a whole cow directly from a local farmer to be slaughtered and shared equally on Meugang.

This collective *meuripee* strategy cleverly cuts through the long market distribution channels and prevents communities from being trapped by high prices from middlemen in modern markets. Furthermore, traditional Acehese customary institutions such as the *Gampong* (village) government, led by the *Keuchik* (village head) and the *Imum Meunasah* (village-level religious leader), play a central role as agents of economic redistribution. These customary authorities typically manage village communal funds sourced from *zakat mal* (alms), *infak*

(donations), and voluntary donations from successful migrants, specifically allocating them to purchase several Meugang cows, the meat of which is then distributed fairly and equitably to all poor families and orphans in the village without exception. This reality aligns closely with James C. Scott's concept of "moral economy," in which rural communities have a subsistence ethic—a principle of shared security that prioritizes the basic needs of all community members above calculations of individual economic gain. This demonstrates that local social capital can serve as a strong food security and social safety net against the onslaught of the free market economy.

3. Reconstruction of the Social Studies Curriculum: Integrating Meugang through Prophetic Sociology

The urgency of incorporating the philosophical and sociological values of the Meugang tradition into the Social Studies (IPS) curriculum in schools is a strategic step to save this subject from pedagogical saturation. Based on instructional analysis, the Meugang tradition is rich in content that aligns with the Learning Outcomes (CP) of IPS, particularly on the topics of social interaction, social institutions, conflict dynamics, and meeting human needs. So far, IPS learning has often been criticized for being too theoretical; for example, when explaining Émile Durkheim's concept of "Organic Solidarity," teachers tend to use analogies of Western industrial society that are foreign to the sociological imagination of students in the regions. By integrating the Meugang tradition as a primary case study, teachers can present phenomena close to the students' empirical world (meaningful learning). Students are no longer simply memorizing the definition of solidarity, but are able to critically identify how the division of labor occurs in the field when villagers work together to skin, cut, and weigh Meugang meat in their own village.

Furthermore, this integration must be accelerated through a prophetic sociological approach in social studies education, a paradigm initiated by Kuntowijoyo which emphasizes three main pillars: humanization, liberation, and transcendence.

- The first pillar, humanization, is implemented by training students' social sensitivity through critical analysis of social studies material on the fate of the poor during Meugang, thereby eroding students' apathy and egoism due to gadget addiction.
- The second pillar, liberation, is carried out by examining how the practice of *meuripee* and the involvement of village customary institutions can free poor communities from the bonds of debt dependence on loan sharks to buy meat.
- The third pillar, transcendence, directs students' understanding that all socio-economic activities in the Meugang tradition are essentially of worship value and have a vertical dimension to God Almighty.

A project-based learning model can be implemented, with students tasked with creating mini-ethnographic reports or sociological documentary videos about Meugang celebrations in their neighborhoods. This visionary pedagogical approach not only enhances students' higher-order thinking skills (HOTS) and social literacy, but also simultaneously builds the character of Pancasila students who are resilient, tolerant, and proud of the uniqueness of their nation's civilization.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Conclusion

Based on the results of a comprehensive literature analysis, it can be concluded that the Meugang tradition has a very important, strategic, and irreplaceable role as a socio-cultural institution that functions to maintain, care for, and strengthen the social solidarity of the Acehese people amidst the onslaught of modernization and industrialization. Through sociological mechanisms embedded in the *meuripee* (group contribution) and *meuraseuki* (philanthropic distribution of meat to the poor) systems, this tradition has empirically succeeded in eroding the barriers of economic stratification, reducing the potential for latent conflict between social classes, and providing a social safety net based on community independence.

In the academic and educational dimensions, the treasure trove of Meugang local wisdom has been proven to contain a very dense wealth of context regarding sociological values, economic morality, and prophetic morality. These authentic values have very high curricular relevance to be reconstructed and integrated into Social Sciences (IPS) subjects as down-to-earth, contextual learning materials. The transformation of Meugang's noble values from the realm of domestic cultural rituals to the realm of educational pedagogy in formal classrooms is expected to be able to produce a young generation of Indonesia who is not only cognitively-academically intelligent, but also has a sensitive conscience, sharp social literacy, a strong collective awareness, and a strong character of enthusiasm for the authentic local values of the archipelago.

Suggestion

Based on the theoretical findings and conclusions obtained in this literature review, several constructive suggestions are formulated for the relevant stakeholders.

1. For the Aceh Provincial Government and the Aceh Traditional Council (MAA): it is hoped that they can produce tactical public policy regulations, such as cheap livestock market operations ahead of the Meugang celebration, in order to control the stability of beef prices in the market so that they are not manipulated by speculators, so that the cultural rights of lower class communities to celebrate Meugang remain protected.
2. For Education Practitioners and Social Science Subject Teachers: It is recommended to immediately abandon the monotonous textual learning pattern and start developing innovative learning tools, either in the form of teaching modules, contextual LKPD, or social science textbook supplements that explicitly highlight the values of social solidarity in the Meugang tradition as local sociology teaching materials.
3. For Further Educational Sociology Researchers: It is recommended to conduct further empirical field research by combining mixed methods, in order to statistically measure the level of effectiveness of the integration of Meugang material towards increasing the emotional intelligence (emotional quotient) and social solidarity index of students in schools.

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