

## Kenduri on the 40<sup>th</sup> Day of Death (A Socio-Cultural Analysis in Gampong Geudong, Sungai Mas District, West Aceh Regency)

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### ABSTRACT

*Kenduri* on the 40-day of the death is a tradition carried out by the Acehnese people as part of a series of ceremonies to commemorate someone's death on the 40-day after death which functions as a significant socio-cultural event that reflects the values and beliefs of the community around death and memory. This article aims to describe in depth the process of the *kenduri* on the 40-day of the death, the meaning and symbols of its implementation and the community's perception of the *kenduri* on the 40th day of death in Gampong Geudong, Sungai Mas District, West Aceh Regency. This study uses a qualitative research method with an ethnographic approach. Data collection techniques used are observation, interviews and documentation. The results of the study show that the *kenduri* on the 40-day of the death is usually held at the funeral home after death, as a continuation of the series of death ceremonies that begin from *sakaratul maut* until the 100th night. Before the peak event, a village meeting is usually held and notification is given to all residents and relatives so that they can attend and participate in the gathering to hold a prayer together. Preparation for the feast includes making cakes that have strong symbolic and social meanings such as *bu leukat* (symbolizing attachment) and *breuh/umping* (additional food for the spirit) which are manifested through the implementation of the feast and the giving of *kue toeng peut ploh*, as a form of respect and prayer for the spirit and to bind social relations in the community. The community also views the 40-day death feast as a very important and sacred cultural tradition, which is still believed to exist from generation to generation and as a form of solidarity and social concern between village residents.

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### ABSTRAK

Kenduri 40 hari kematian adalah tradisi yang dilakukan masyarakat Aceh sebagai bagian dari rangkaian upacara memperingati kematian seseorang pada hari ke 40 setelah meninggal dunia yang berfungsi sebagai peristiwa sosiokultural yang signifikan yang mencerminkan nilai-nilai dan kepercayaan masyarakat seputar kematian dan ingatan. Artikel ini bertujuan mendeskripsikan secara mendalam tentang proses ritual kenduri di hari 40 kematian, makna dan simbol pelaksanaannya serta persepsi masyarakat terhadap kenduri di hari 40 kematian di Gampong Geudong Kecamatan Sungai Mas Kabupaten Aceh Barat. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode penelitian kualitatif dengan pendekatan etnografi. Teknik pengumpulan data menggunakan observasi, wawancara dan studi dokumentasi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kenduri 40 hari biasanya dilaksanakan di rumah duka sekitar 40 hari setelah kematian, sebagai kelanjutan dari rangkaian upacara kematian yang dimulai sejak *sakaratul maut* hingga malam ke-100. Sebelum acara puncak, biasanya diadakan rapat gampong dan pemberitahuan ke seluruh warga serta saudara agar mereka dapat hadir dan berpartisipasi untuk berkumpul mengadakan doa bersama. Persiapan kenduri meliputi pembuatan kue yang memiliki makna simbolik dan sosial yang kuat seperti *Bu Leukat* (melambangkan kelekatan) dan *Breuh/Umping* (makanan tambahan untuk arwah) yang diwujudkan melalui pelaksanaan kenduri dan pemberian Kue

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Toeng Peut Ploh, sebagai bentuk penghormatan dan doa bagi arwah serta pengikat hubungan sosial di masyarakat. Masyarakat juga memandang kenduri 40 hari kematian sebagai tradisi budaya yang sangat penting dan sakral, yang masih diyakini keberadaannya secara turun temurun dan sebagai wujud solidaritas serta kepedulian sosial antarwarga gampong.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Acehnese people have previously known forms of belief that are considered as original beliefs that have been inherited by their ancestors, thus causing a mixture of existing religions and cultures (Kahmad, 2006). One of the cultures in West Aceh, West Aceh is one of the regencies on the west coast of Aceh with its capital in Meulaboh. West Aceh is known for its many customs and cultures that are still strong, such as the death feast. The city of Meulaboh covers all of Johan Pahlawan, part of Kaway XVI sub-district to Gampong Marek and part of Samatiga sub-district to Suak Timah and Meureubo sub-district, especially the Meureubo settlement (Dadek, 2015).

The culture is something related to humans as creatures, while the Islamic religion is a guide to life that comes from Allah SWT. Although the Islamic religion is not a culture, the implementation of Islam in everyday life will always be related to culture. One example of the relationship between religion and culture can be seen in the procedures for carrying out ritual ceremonies (worship) related to death. The event of death is the power of Allah that all creatures or humans will definitely experience, while the customs of death ceremonies are only traditions created by humans to release someone who has died (Syukriah, 2014). These ceremonies are still maintained because they are needed by society to meet customary demands (Kahmad, 2006).

Likewise, in society Gampong Geudong, customs must be carried out and fulfilled. In addition, must obey it as the Acehnese proverb states that: *mate aneuk meupat jeurat, gadoh adat pat tamita*. This proverb illustrates that customs and children are positioned equally important if the deceased child still has traces, namely the grave, while if the lost customs do not know where to look for them (Zuana, 2018).

Death feast is a tradition that has long been practiced by the community. This feast is held several times, namely on the third, fifth, seventh and fortieth or forty-fourth day and on every holiday. In the Acehnese society, when holding a feast when someone dies, it cannot be separated from other worship in Islamic religious practices, such as reading the Quran, *dhikr*, and so on. One of the factors is that Islam has grown rapidly and become the majority religion in Aceh, especially since Aceh has been known as the Veranda of Mecca. Therefore, almost all cultures in Acehnese society contain Islamic nuances, such as: *peutron aneuk* feast (Manan, 2019), pregnancy and chilbraring (Manan, 2021), naming babies

(Manan, 2022) *sunatan rasul* feast, *tulak bala* feast (Manan, 2021; 2017), *maulid* feast (Manan, 2015; 2018), *peusijuk* and others (Syukriah, 2014). The death ceremony in the Geudong community is very strong in its belief in death feasts, namely items left behind by the deceased, usually in the form of the last clothes worn before he was in the throes of death, as conveyed by Mr. DB as follows:

*“Cloth, pillows, sheets, mats, clothes, peci, and headscarves. Then all of these items are placed on the bed in a room that was occupied when the person died, the room has been sacred for 40 days, the community believes that the spirit of the deceased is still in the room, along with the items left behind. This kind of custom has become something that must be done in the Sungai Mas community, especially in Gampong Geudong”* (DB, interview, May 21, 2025).

As with the Acehnese people in various other regions, the Geudong community also has its own procedures and uniqueness in death ceremonies or traditions. The traditions that apply in this area are different from those practiced in other places. This tradition is a must that is carried out in death customs, especially in Gampong Geudong, because on the first night until the last night of the fortieth day, the community assumes that the spirit of the corpse always returns home until the 40th night. The last night is considered the night of releasing the spirit because it will return to the Almighty and not return again.

## **2. METHOD**

This study is a qualitative study that can help in obtaining data presented objectively (Nugroho et al., 2021). The location of the study was in Gampong Geudong, Sungai Mas District, West Aceh Regency. This location was chosen because the *Kenduri* 40-day death tradition is still actively preserved and has a strong cultural value in the local community. Research on *kenduri* on the 40day of the death was conducted using a qualitative field study. Analysis data is done holistically, namely an approach in anthropology to describe a culture as an integrated whole or network related to the elements of that culture functionally (Bungin, 2007). This research was carried out using the ethnographic method, according to Suparlan in the book on qualitative research methods, explaining that ethnographic research can be seen as a systematic activity in order to understand the way of life of another society, from our own and understanding must be in accordance with the perspective of the supporters of the culture itself. In line with that, the research used was through observation, interviews and documentation (Ratna, 2010). The subjects in this study were found in the purposive sampling technique. The selection of this technique further determines the understanding and experience of informants in their fields (Manan, 2015; 2021).

Data collection techniques using observation, interviews and documentation studies. Regarding the *Kenduri* 40 death tradition in the Sungai Mas community, West Aceh Regency, this study uses a qualitative research method and because this assessment is a study of culture, an approach based on field data is used to describe a culture functionally (Subagyo, 2004). The main data sources used in this study are people who are observed or interviewed, documents and interview results from informants such as traditional figures, religious leaders and people who have experience in *Kenduri* 40 days of death in Sungai Mas District, West Aceh Regency (Moleong, 2007).

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION (12 PT)

#### *The 40 Days of Death Kenduri Process in Geudong Village*

Culture is everything related to the creativity, taste, will, and work of the Acehnese people obtained through the process of education, inheritance of values, adaptation to the environment, and inspired and based on the Islamic religion (Herawati, 2016). Then culture is used by humans to face their problems with certain environments, both natural and socio-cultural (Zulkifli, 2020). And tradition is one of the most intense things to date that applies in the lives of the Acehnese people. Acehnese culture is very thick with Islamic values so that almost all arts and cultural activities in Aceh have an Islamic nuance (Nur, 2018). This culture is also a legacy of ancestors that is preserved from generation to generation and reflects the long history and diversity of the Acehnese people, one of which is the *kenduri* of 40 days of death tradition in Aceh. This *kenduri* is carried out in every funeral home which is one of the traditions that has been carried out from generation to generation and has been inherited since ancient times until now.

*Kenduri* of 40 -day of the death tradition is one of the local cultures that is still believed in by the community, especially in Gampong Geudong, Sungai Mas District, West Aceh Regency. It is a story that is passed down from generation to generation. This was conveyed by Mr. H as follows:

*"The 40-day of the death feast tradition is carried out when one of the people dies. It is held as a legacy from the ancestors, therefore the people never remove it and always hold the feast because it has become a tradition and custom in the Geudong Village community, Sungai Mas district, West Aceh Regency. It is always held to coincide with the 40-day of the death. The Geudong Village community believes that the 40-day of the death feast is a form of final offering for the deceased, then the family carries out samadiyah together to send prayers to the deceased spirit, so that the deceased spirit is at peace there. If one of them is hit by a disaster or other event, the 40-day death feast event will be shifted to the 44th day of death, as well as its implementation in the Geudong Village community which has been carried out from generation to generation until now and will never be eliminated. Because by carrying out the feast, the community is more compact in holding an event and strengthening the ties of friendship between Village, relatives and surrounding areas"* (H, interview, May 19, 2025)

The 40-day of the death feast, the family also carried out the process of making cakes that would take place 14 days after death, starting from pounding flour and buying other equipment. This is in accordance with what was conveyed by Mrs. M, namely:

*"The process of making this cake is assisted by the closest neighbors and family, during the cake making process, they make various cakes. The cakes provided in the 40-day death feast in Gampong Geudong include the following: Kueh Keukarah, Kueh Seupet, Bolu Boi, Kue Bawang, Sagon, Banana Chips, Kueh Bungong Kaye, Dodoi, Wajeb, Buu Thoe, Kue Pret, Bolu Tulban, kembang dapur, Kueh Mentega, Kueh Bungong Muling and Kueh Kepang Kacang"*(M, interview, May 19, 2025)

Next, at the stage of the 40-day death *kenduri*, a family meeting is also held. This

family meeting is a gathering of siblings from both parties, namely the father's sibling and the mother's sibling. The family of the deceased discusses one goal to hold the 40-day of death *kenduri* event. From that, the house calls the siblings to hand over the event to the siblings to help each other. If in the 40-day death event the siblings do not want to or do it from 40 days, he personally, then there will be difficulties in the second process of 40 –day of the death, this happens to families who are less fortunate. So with the family meeting, namely the gathering of siblings from both parties, they can help to carry out the *kenduri*, and with such an event, both parties can make the ties of friendship unbroken.

After holding a family meeting, notification is needed to be sent to the homes. The notification is distributed at the family meeting, which aims to inform relatives or residents. The village that also attended the 40-day death event. The announcement began on the 30th day or a week before the event arrived to inform relatives and the community about the 40-day death event.

After making a notification to the houses and holding a meeting, on the 40th day of death or the peak day, relatives and the community gathered starting from the 38th or 39th day to prepare for the peak night of the 40-day death feast. Relatives and the community distributed their respective tasks while at the funeral home, both men and women who participated in the work. This peak event was the *kenduri* day where at this stage all family members from both parties and the village community came to the funeral home, which was held on the 40th day of death which started from morning to evening. After the *maghrib* prayer was finished, the *tengku* of the mosque congregation and the neighbors of the village came to gather again to hold a *samadiyah* event, which was led by the *tengku* of the mosque and the Islamic boarding school from the village itself or outside the village, namely as the closing of the event.

The house and family invite students or *teungku* and their members to study from 11 am until dawn and bring beautiful poetry. Furthermore, the distribution of *kue toeng peut ploh*, the distribution of *kue toeng peut ploh* on the day of death is given to every guest who is present, especially for the *teungku* and their members. This is in accordance with what was conveyed by Mr. J as follows:

*"The distribution of the cake is given to someone who is about to go home. The distribution of the cake is filled according to the guest's gift to the funeral home, and depends on the party working on the distribution of the cake. While for students or teungku who hold pengajian and poetry at night until dawn, they are given one box of kue toeng peut ploh per person and fruits and drinks that are so special for students and teungku so that they are more enthusiastic about holding tahlilan and praying together for the deceased"*(J, interview, May 21, 2025)

### **The Meaning and Symbols of the Implementation of the 40-Day Death Feast in Gampong Geudong**

The meaning of the implementation of *kenduri* on the 40-day of the death in Gampong Geudong, Sungai Mas District, West Aceh Regency is as a form of respect and prayer for the deceased who has passed away, as well as an important ritual in the process of the spirit's journey to the afterlife. This *kenduri* is held exactly on the 40th day after death and has a deep symbolic meaning in the culture of the Acehnese

people, especially in Gampong Geudong, Sungai Mas District, West Aceh Regency.

Specifically, the 40-day death feast aims to pray that the spirit of the deceased can rest in peace and receive provisions on the journey to the afterlife. On the 40-day of the death, it is believed to be the time limit for the spirit to explore the world before finally returning to its eternal place. This feast is also a moment to strengthen ties between families and the surrounding community, as well as a form of social concern for families who are grieving. This is in accordance with what Mr. M said as follows:

*"Likewise, every day left by the deceased has its own meaning, including:*

- *Day 1 (The corpse will change a little as if it is withering)*
- *Day 2 (Starting to wilt)*
- *Day 3 (Getting wilted)*
- *Day 5 (Already feeling bloated)*
- *7th Day (The corpse will erupt)*
- *Day 14 (The corpse begins to decompose, becoming like a worm or something similar, depending on our deeds)*
- *Day 30 (The corpse is increasingly destroyed and the bones are separated from the flesh)*
- *40th day (The body is destroyed and rotting, but the soul returns home. On the 40th day is the last night which is considered the night of the release of the spirit because it will return to the Almighty and will not return again except Friday night, therefore, an all-out event is held on the last day to gather together to read prayers, remembrance as a final tribute so that the soul of the deceased finds peace in the realm there)"*(M, interview, May 20, 2025).

The meaning and symbol of the implementation of the 40-day death feast in West Aceh, especially in Gampong Geudong, Sungai Mas District, is very rich and full of cultural and religious values. Symbolic is a symbol or a kind of man-made tool. In making a proper way, in order to carry out a meeting or ceremony with special equipment that is sacred. The ceremony is formed from a combination of various elements of the ceremony, including praying, sacrificing and eating together (Muhammad, 2007). The 40-day of the death feast is a tradition that is routinely carried out as a form of final respect for the deceased who have died 40 days earlier. This feast functions as a means of joint prayer (*samadiyah*) to pray for the spirit to get a good place in the sight of Allah and a smooth journey for the spirit to the next world (Manan, 2014). The feast also strengthens the ties of friendship and social solidarity between village residents, strengthens family relationships and togetherness in society. The implementation of this feast is considered very important, if not done, the community believes that the spirit of the deceased will experience difficulties in the afterlife.

The symbol of *kenduri* on the 40th day of the death is known as *kue toeng peut ploh*. This was conveyed by Mrs. M as follows:

*"Toeng peut ploh cake is a food package prepared by the deceased's family to be distributed to guests who attend. Each content of toeng peut ploh cake contains symbolic meaning, including:*

a) *Bu Leukat.*

*Bu leukat is one of the dishes provided by the house or family for*

*guests who attend Gampong Geudong, Sungai Mas District, West Aceh Regency, which symbolizes the closeness or spiritual bond between the family and the deceased to strengthen ties with the Gampong community.*

*b) Breuh/Umping*

*Breuh/Umping is additional food intended for spirits, as a form of attention and fulfillment of the spirits' needs in the other world.*

*c) Bu Kulah*

*Bu Kulah is a special wrapped rice given to the priest or prayer leader, symbolizing provisions for the spirit so that it does not lack when making the journey to the next world.*

*d) traditional cakes*

*e) Traditional cakes also symbolize gifts or hand bouquets from the deceased's family to guests, as an expression of respect and gratitude for their presence."(M, interview, May 19, 2025).*

These symbols not only contain spiritual and religious meanings, but also strengthen social and cultural values in the community in Gampong Geudong, Sungai Mas District, West Aceh Regency. This tradition is believed to help smooth the journey of the deceased's spirit and at the same time strengthen social relations between residents through joint activities in the *kenduri*. The implementation of this *kenduri* also goes through several stages such as preparation for making cakes, a Gampong meeting to organize the event, notification to residents, until the peak event which is filled with joint prayers and reading of the *yasin*.

Therefore, the 40-day death feast in Gampong Geudong, Sungai Mas District, West Aceh Regency is not only a religious ritual, but also a social tradition that contains strong spiritual and symbolic meaning. This ritual confirms the belief of the Acehnese people that death is a process of moving the spirit and that the prayers and respects carried out can help the journey of the deceased's spirit towards peace in the afterlife.

### **Public Perception of the 40-Day Death Feast in Gampong Geudong**

The public perception of the 40-day death feast in Gampong Geudong, Sungai Mas District, West Aceh Regency, is generally very positive and full of respect for this tradition as an important part of their culture and religion. The 40-day of death feast is considered a mandatory ritual to pray for the deceased so that their spirit may rest in peace and receive provisions on their journey to the afterlife.

The community believes that the implementation of this feast is not only a form of respect for the deceased, but also as a means of strengthening ties and social solidarity between residents of Gampong Geudong. The public perception of the 40-day of the death feast in West Aceh, especially in Gampong Geudong, Sungai Mas District, is very deep and complex, reflecting strong cultural, social, and religious values. This was conveyed by Mr. AJ as follows:

*“The people of Gampong Geudong view the 40-day of the death feast as an important part of a series of death traditions that have been carried out from generation to generation. This feast is not just a social event, but also a religious ritual that has deep spiritual meaning. This feast is held to pray for the soul of the deceased so that they get a good place in the sight of Allah and so that the soul's journey to the afterlife goes smoothly. This event is a momentum for the community to gather together to pray and remember the deceased, while strengthening social solidarity and a sense of togetherness in the community”* (AJ, interview, May 22, 2025).

In addition, *kenduri* also functions as a form of final respect for the deceased. The giving of *kue toeng peut ploh* is a package containing traditional cakes and snacks brought by the in-laws and siblings which have symbolic meaning as a sign of spiritual attachment, attention, and provisions for the spirit in the other world. If this tradition is not carried out, the community believes the spirit will experience difficulties, so that the implementation of *kenduri* becomes a social and moral obligation.

Public perception also shows that there is strong social pressure to carry out the 40-day *kenduri* in full. A son-in-law who does not bring *kue toeng peut ploh* will be considered a disgrace and will be criticized by the community and the family of the deceased, although there are no formal legal sanctions. This indicates that this *kenduri* is not only a religious ritual, but also a socially binding cultural norm. Although this tradition is highly respected, there are also differences in perception among the community and religious leaders regarding the practice of *kenduri* matins. Some groups criticize or reject this tradition for certain reasons, such as concerns about practices that are considered not in accordance with pure Islamic teachings. However, this rejection is difficult to apply widely because *kenduri* is deeply rooted in the community's culture and has become part of their social identity.

In the social aspect, humans as social beings should help each other in lightening the burden for the bereaved family, with the existence of *kenduri* a sense of togetherness is realized. With a high social feeling, there is no difference between the rich and the poor, either ethnicity or race. Therefore, it is necessary for us to understand the traditions that exist in Acehese society today towards the establishment of a form of togetherness among the community. Based on the traditional attitudes that are widely practiced by the Acehese people in general, they also prioritize the social aspect. The goal is to strengthen togetherness, thereby becoming a strong society. Until now, the people of Gampong Geudong, Sungai Mas District, West Aceh Regency still have a high social attitude, every time there is an activity, be it a religious tradition or other social activities, every citizen participates in helping (Nur, 2014).

The funeral *kenduri* held by the Acehese people until now is still a complete social system in binding togetherness. The togetherness is shown by helping each other when a family is grieving, then residents will come and visit in turns bringing food to ease the grieving family when entertaining visitors. For the majority of Acehese people, especially in Gampong Geudong, Sungai Mas District, West Aceh Regency, *kenduri* has become a part of Islam. They assume that *kenduri* is a recommendation from Islam to comfort the grieving family, no matter how the

procedure is, as long as there is an Islamic nuance, such as reciting the Koran, dhikr and praying. Indirectly, the matter of reciting the Koran, dhikr and praying at the time of the death *kenduri* teaches younger people to know the readings that contain prayers and wisdom that should be practiced. This indirect learning has become a social order that is unconsciously rooted in the lives of the Acehese people.

Likewise, in the cultural aspect, holding a *kenduri* is providing or serving food to guests, whether relatives, neighbors or close friends who come to the funeral home to pay their respects. When the *kenduri* is held, relatives and the community help each other with the bereaved family, so that in terms of culture this becomes a positive custom in the form of mutual cooperation. The people of Gampong Geudong, Sungai Mas District, West Aceh Regency believe that for 40 days the spirit is still on earth and often returns home because of their longing for their family, so with this belief the community holds a *kenduri* so that the spirit feels calm and happy. The *kenduri* habit that has become part of the culture in Acehese society cannot be eliminated anymore, we can feel this ourselves (Nur, 2014).

Every process related to human life, namely birth, marriage and death are always accompanied by customs and traditions, and these customs in each process have so many ways. The traditions that have become roots in Acehese society until now have become a benchmark for togetherness in the lives of its people (Manan, 2016). Talking about culture, it concerns all ideas, creations, feelings and intentions produced by humans themselves in facing various trials of life. Speaking of death, the *kenduri* tradition which is part of the Acehese culture should be taken as a lesson. The lesson in question is from the aspect of *kanduri* procedures, especially the *tong kue peut ploh* tradition, which emphasizes togetherness in calming the mood of a grieving family.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The *kenduri* ritual on the 40-day of the death is an important traditional and religious tradition in Acehese society, especially in areas such as Gampong Geudong, Sungai Mas District, West Aceh Regency. This *kenduri* is held on the 40-day of the death from morning to morning. The 40-day of the death *kenduri* is held as a form of respect and prayer for the deceased so that their spirit may rest in peace and receive provisions on their journey to the afterlife. This ritual also functions to strengthen social solidarity and ties of friendship between residents.

The implementation of *kenduri* includes several stages such as making cakes, village meetings, notification to residents, joint prayer events, and making *kue toeng peut ploh*. They cakes are food packages that have deep symbolic meanings. The symbols in *toeng peut ploh* include sticky rice as a symbol of spiritual attachment, additional food for the spirit, provisions for the spirit's journey, and cakes as gifts or hand flowers for the deceased's family.

The community believes that the implementation of the 40-day *kenduri* is very important, if it is not done, the spirit of the deceased is believed to have difficulty in its journey. The 40-day is also considered the deadline for the spirit to explore the world before returning to its place in the afterlife. Thus, this *kenduri* is not only a religious ritual, but also a socio-cultural tradition that contains spiritual, symbolic values, and strengthening of community relations that have been carried out for generations in Gampong Geudong, Sungai Mas District, West Aceh Regency. Therefore, the implementation of the *kenduri*

ritual on the 40-day of the death in Gampong Geudong, West Aceh Regency should be preserved by paying attention to its symbolic meaning and social value, and carried out simply so as not to burden the family of the deceased but still maintain enjoyment and solidarity between communities.

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