

MATRIFOICALITY AND ITS IMPLICATION TO THE PRACTICE OF ISLAMIC FAMILY LAW IN THE PATRIARCHAL MUSLIM SOCIETY OF GAYO, INDONESIA

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Abstract

Many scholars have studied matrilocality in Indonesia as a social system in a matrilineal community. Few observe matrilocality as a practice in a purely patriarchal society. This research examines emerging matrilocality in the pure patriarchal Gayo community of Aceh province. The emergence started with the invention of the coffee plantation, which led the Gayonese people to rearrange their social system and invent a new residential marriage pattern that led the matrilocality into practice. This research conducted some phases of fieldwork; intensive ethnographical fieldwork was conducted in 2014-2015, which was updated in 2018-2019 in Central Aceh and Bener Meriah districts. The standard qualitative method (interview and observation) was also applied to several Gayonese academicians and professionals living in Banda Aceh municipality, the capital of Aceh Province, to see the practice of Islamic family law in their families. This research found that the invention of economic sources prompted Gayonese people to migrate internally, which resulted in practicing neolocal marriage. This new marriage pattern started the matrilocality practice that set a new power relationship of the purely patriarchal society to a relatively equal one. This happened once with the increasing Islamization of the area. Instead of strengthening patriarchal tradition, it gives space for women to assert their role and rights over property equality with men.

Keywords: *neolocal; matrilocality; Islamic law; women; daughter; coffee plantation.*

Abstrak

Banyak peneliti telah mempelajari matrilocalitas di Indonesia sebagai sebuah sistem sosial dalam masyarakat matrilineal, namun masih terbatas studi yang mengamati matrilocalitas sebagai sebuah praktik dalam masyarakat yang murni patriarkis. Penelitian ini mengkaji praktik-praktik matrilocalitas yang muncul di masyarakat Gayo yang patriarkis di provinsi Aceh. Penataan ulang sistem sosial masyarakat Gayo yang mengarah pada praktik matrilocalitas dimulai dari penemuan perkebunan kopi. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan etnografi di Kabupaten Aceh Tengah dan Bener Meriah. Wawancara juga dilakukan dengan orang Gayo yang tinggal di

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kota Banda Aceh. Penelitian ini menemukan bahwa penemuan sumber-sumber ekonomi mendorong orang Gayo untuk bermigrasi secara internal, yang kemudian mempraktikkan pernikahan neolokal. Pola pernikahan baru ini memulai praktik matrifokalitas yang memfemininisasi hubungan kekuasaan dalam masyarakat patriarki murni. Hal ini terjadi seiring dengan meningkatnya Islamisasi di daerah tersebut. Alih-alih memperkuat tradisi patriarki, situasi ini justru memberikan ruang bagi perempuan untuk menegaskan peran dan haknya atas kesetaraan properti dengan laki-laki.

Kata Kunci: *neolokal; matrifokalitas; hukum Islam; perempuan; anak perempuan; perkebunan kopi.*

مستخلص

درس العديد من العلماء الأمومية في إندونيسيا كنظام اجتماعي في المجتمع الأمومي. قلة هم الذين يلاحظون أن الأمومية كممارسة في مجتمع أبوي بحت. يبحث هذا البحث في ممارسات الأمومية الناشئة في مجتمع جايبو الأبوي في إقليم أتشيه. يبدأ باختراع مزرعة البن التي ألهمت Gayonese لإعادة ترتيب نظامهم الاجتماعي مما يؤدي إلى ممارسة الأمومية. استخدم هذا البحث نهجاً إثنوغرافياً في منطقتي أتشيه الوسطى وبنير مريا. تم إجراء مقابلة أيضاً مع Gayonese الذين يعيشون في بلدية باندا أتشيه. وجد هذا البحث أن اختراع المصادر الاقتصادية أدى إلى هجرة Gayonese داخلياً مما أدى إلى ممارسة الزواج المحلي الجديد. بدأ نمط الزواج الجديد هذا ممارسة الأمومية التي تؤنث علاقات القوة في مجتمع أبوي خالص. حدث هذا مرة واحدة مع الأسلمة المتزايدة في المنطقة. بدلاً من تعزيز التقاليد الأبوية، فإنه يعطي مساحة للمرأة لتأكيد دورها وحقوقها في المساواة في الملكية للرجل.

الكلمات الرئيسية: مزرعة القهوة; البن; المرأة; احكام الاسلام; الاسرة الامومية; الجديد المحلي

A. Introduction

Scholars describe matrifocality as a social system where women, particularly mothers, are structurally, culturally, and effectively central in a family, kinship, or community. It also refers to systems where spouses, brothers, and sisters cooperate and share spaces and responsibilities.¹ The system provides women with more economic resources, political and cultural roles, and other opportunities.² Matrifocality can co-exist with any lineage patterns, marriage traditions, and cultural formation.³

¹ Jimí O. Adésinà, "Re-Appropriating Matrifocality: Endogeneity and African Gender Scholarship," 2010; Sophie Blanchy, "A Matrilineal and Matrilocal Muslim Society in Flux: Negotiating Gender and Family Relations in the Comoros," *Africa: The Journal of the International African Institute* 89, no. 1 (2019): 21–39; Blackwood Evelyn, "Big Houses and Small Houses: Doing Matrilineality in West Sumatra," *Etnos* 64, no. 1 (1999): 32–56; Morrissey Marietta, "Gender, Race, and Kinship: Searching for the Matrifocal Family," n.d.; Joke Schrijvers and Els Postel-Coster, "Minangkabau women: Change in a matrilineal society," *Archipel* 13, no. 1 (1977): 79–103.; Eka Srimulyani, "Islam, Adat, and the State: Matrifocality in Aceh Revisited," *Al-Jami'ah: Journal of Islamic Studies* 48, no. 2 (2010): 321–42.

² Evelyn, "Big Houses and Small Houses: Doing Matrilineality in West Sumatra"; Srimulyani, "Islam, Adat, and The State"; Blanchy, "A Matrilineal and Matrilocal Muslim Society in Flux."

³ Adésinà, "Re-Appropriating Matrifocality"; Schrijvers and Postel-Coster, "Minangkabau women."

Scholars have also observed that matriliney and matrifocality are common in Indonesian societies with a strong migration culture, like Minangkabau in West Sumatra and Pidie in Aceh province.⁴ Men from these societies migrate for economic and maturational purposes. The absence of men enables women to acquire political and cultural roles and property control. After marriage, they receive property or other capital, granting them greater household autonomy. Matrifocal practices are also prevalent in bilateral societies, such as the Bimanese. Although Bimanese women do not gain significant political and cultural influence, they are decisive in certain cultural events, such as in conjugal processes where they enforce their agencies in collective solidarity.⁵ These studies observe that although women in that Muslim community have solid cultural authority by which they enforce their agencies and exercise authority in the family, women remain to be the subject of misogynist interpretation of Islamic law. The common situation is also observed in Comoro, although women dominate cultural and political realms.⁶ This is as Chanchy observes the compatibility of Islam with such matrifocal residential patterns and even with matrilineal society.

The compatibility, as amm da Abd al- argued, is possible because Islam does not come with a particular residential and marriage pattern. Islam only stresses believers to express and fulfill the mutual expectation from any residential and marriage practices controlling community. Instead of transforming Muslim societies into patriarchal and paternalistic ones, Islamic law encourages and then makes essential the existing social order, morals, political roles of kin, marriage practice, and residential pattern to achieve the community members' mutual interests. All of them are structured within Islamic principles. According to Abd al- , the adaptability, and permissibility of Islam with any social structure and residential patterns of a community, on which lays the formation of the power relationship between gender, are due to Islamic law based on the principle of "liberty" and "permissible."⁷

The debate on communal property in the old-time Minangkabau community shows liberty and permissible principles. The pre-Islamic tradition of *Pusako Tinggi* (communal property of the Minangkabau organized by a woman as their highest cultural structure) was considered un-Islamic as it was animated from pre-Islamic times. But through a big summit of

⁴ Srimulyani, "Islam, Adat, and The State."

⁵ Atun Wardatun, "Matrifocality and Collective Solidarity in Practicing Agency: Marriage Negotiation Among the Bimanese Muslim Women in Eastern Indonesia," *Journal of International Women's Studies* 20, no. 2 (2019): 43–57.

⁶ Blanchy, "A Matrilineal and Matrilocal Muslim Society in Flux."

⁷ amm da Abd al- , *The Family Structure in Islam* (Lagos: Islamic Publications Bureau, 1982), 16–22.

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Minangkabau elites, the *Pusako Tinggi* is maintained as a *hibah* (religious donation). Keeping the property as *hibah* obliges Muslims to preserve and use it for communal purposes in the same way they protect other forms of religious donation. Preserving *Pusako Tinggi* is fundamental to maintaining the very basic social structure of Minangkabau society in which women remain at the highest of the cultural structure in Minangkabau. Meanwhile, Minangkabau society divides *Pusako Rendah* (acquired property) following the standard rule of Islamic law for inheritance distribution (2:1 for men and women respectively) because it is earned wealth after marriage unrelated to communal property.⁸ The latter is also practiced by the people of Pidie in Aceh province; although women control family property in the absence of men, daughters are given property such as houses and some land as their capital after marriage.

However, matrilocality is not exclusively a cultural practice of certain types of society. It is also becoming a practice in pure patriarchal societies with patrilocal as a common residential marriage pattern. For a long time, experts have observed that economic development and modernization have changed occupation patterns that led to changing culture, beliefs, family patterns, and values, including the changing of residential patterns even in patriarchal communities with patrilocal marriage patterns. Economic growth and industrialization have involved women in the labor market, contributing to women's autonomy in their families. The new residential pattern and financial autonomy have relatively freed women from cultural and communal expectations.⁹ It is, as Cecile Jackson concludes, that the more modernity in one society, the more matrilocality one society will become.¹⁰ However, this article stresses that economic development is not a single factor

⁸ Al Yasa' Abubakar, *Metode Istislahiah: Pemamfaatan Ilmu Pengetahuan Dalam Ushul Fiqh* (Jakarta: Prenadamedia Group, 2016), 202; Hamka, *Adat Minangkabau menghadapi revolusi*, Tjet. ke-2. (Djakarta: Tekad, 1963), 78; Eka Srimulyani, "Women and Matrimonial Lives in Aceh 'Matrifocal' Society: A Preliminary Survey," *Heritage of Nusantara* 4, no. 2 (December 2015): 313–28; James T Siegel, *The Rope of God* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1969), 138–39.

⁹ R. Inglehart and W. E. Baker, "Modernization, Cultural Change, and the Persistence of Traditional Values," *American Sociological Review* 65, no. 1 (2000): 19–51; Anu Rammohan and Meliyanni Johar, "The Determinants of Married Women's Autonomy in Indonesia," *Feminist Economics*, *Feminist Economics*, 15, no. 4 (2009): 31–55; I. N. Keasberry, "Elder Care and Intergenerational Relationships in Rural Yogyakarta, Indonesia," *Ageing and Society* 21, no. 5 (2001): 641–65; Elizabeth Frankenberg and Randall Kuhn, "The Implications of Family Systems and Economic Context for Intergenerational Transfers in Indonesia and Bangladesh," 2004; A. Malhotra, "Gender and Changing Generational Relations: Spouse Choice in Indonesia," *Demography* 28, no. 4 (1991): 549–70; Ronald Inglehart, *Modernization and Postmodernization: Cultural, Economic, and Political Change in 43 Societies* (Princeton: University Press, 2020), 5–6, 324–28.

¹⁰ Cecile Jackson, "Modernity and Matrilocality: The Feminization of Kinship?" *Development and Change* 46, no. 1 (2015): 1–24; Salmah Mursyid and Nasruddin Yusuf, "Changes in Marriage Age Limits and Marriage Dispensations: A Study of Causes and Impacts on the Religious Courts in North Sulawesi," *Samarah* 6, no. 2 (July 1, 2022): 975–96, <https://doi.org/10.22373/SJHK.V6I2.12439>. Inayatillah et al., "Social History of

leading matrifocality into practice in a Muslim community. As one of the most essential elements for any Muslim community, Islamic law plays a fundamental role in supporting and sustaining the continuity of matrifocality. Islamic law sanctifies life experiences and gives religious significance to what may appear as the most routine activities, such as how someone should eat, cleanse, and socialize with others. All these activities are wished-for as a way to keep Muslims on the path that brings them closer to God¹¹ Abd al- points out, although Islamic law moralizes and places all legal action in the context of religion, at the same time, it also tends to discourage formalizing religious and moral rules, eventually supporting the designation of social control as ultimately righteous.¹² In Gayo society, a purely patriarchal society, matrifocality began to be practiced gradually after coffee plantations became massive. This economic development encouraged the practice of neolocal marriage. This new marriage pattern encouraged Gayo society to reorganize their social arrangement, embracing the reorganization of their social capital in which power relations between genders are integral. This ultimately promoted matrifocality, allowing women to assert their roles and authority in the family. This new development happened once with the increasing Islamization that aimed at eliminating patriarchal culture, particularly in familial matters. In turn, it emancipated women from some discriminating traditions against them.

This article is constructed on how the economic (the invention of coffee plantations) and Islamic law developments led to the emergence of matrifocality practice in Gayo society. To answer this question, research for data collection was conducted in separate times. The initial data collection using an ethnographic approach was conducted in 2014-2015 in the Central Aceh and Bener Meriah districts of Aceh province, Indonesia, which was updated in 2018-2019. The first author maintained regular visits to both areas and conducted interviews with open-ended questions about the development of Islam and Islamic legal practices in Gayo with Gayonese academicians and professionals living in Banda Aceh, the capital of Aceh province. This article gives a lengthy space for the historical discussion to understand the current situation comprehensively. Ethnographical observation for this article was conducted in one family where the first author stayed during the fieldwork. This data from

Islamic Law from Gender Perspective in Aceh: A Study of Marriage Traditions in South Aceh, Indonesia,” *Samarah* 6, no. 2 (July 1, 2022): 573–93, <https://doi.org/10.22373/SJHK.V6I2.14598>; Luthfi Auni, Abdul Manan, and Al Yasa Abubakar, “Factors Changing the Gayo Ethnic’s Traditional Marriage Procession in Lut Tawar Sub-District of Takengon, Central Aceh, Indonesia,” *Samarah* 6, no. 2 (July 1, 2022): 703–33, <https://doi.org/10.22373/SJHK.V6I2.14888>.

¹¹ Jasser Auda, *Maqasid Al-Shariah as Philosophy of Islamic Law: A Systems Approach* (London: The International Institute of Islamic Thought, 2008), 57; usayn Na r, *Ideals and Realities of Islam* (London [etc.]: Aquarian, 1994), 85–86.

¹² Abd al- , *The Family Structure in Islam*, 17.

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ethnographical observation portrays the outcome of long and complicated social changes since the early independence of Indonesia.

This article is divided into five sections. The first section discusses the emergence of coffee plantations and their impact on residential patterns in Gayo. The following discussion concerns old and new marriage patterns and their effect on the power relationship between genders. This discussion is followed by presenting a case of customized Islamic law in inheritance division that allows women (daughter or sister) to possess property in equal proportion with their male siblings. The following section discusses the implications of the new residential pattern for the daughter's role in a household. The article ends with the conclusion, which is briefly mentioned here, that the emergence of neolocal promoting matrifoicality in a purely patriarchal society results from their effort to maintain social capital, altering the declining support from the original community they previously relied on. The new social arrangement necessitated a new type of power relationship that gave spaces for women or daughters in a family to exercise their authority and to own property that was never given to them before. Such development has progressed and maintained with the support of contextualized Islamic law, moralizing and framing all legal actions in the context of religion, including women's new position and rights. This article thus argues that the practice of matrifoicality in a Muslim patriarchal society is not solely driven by economic development. Islamic law is crucial in supporting and maintaining the continuity of old and new practices. With the flexibility and permissible principles mentioned by Abd al- , Gayonese people contextualize Islamic law to achieve their interest in the new social arrangement and marriage pattern.

B. Discussion

1. The Emergence of Coffee Plantations

Central Aceh and Bener Meriah districts are among the homes for the Gayonese ethnic group, the second largest ethnic group in Aceh province after the Acehnese. Both districts are the center for Arabica coffee plantations on Sumatra Island. By 2018, coffee plantations in Central Aceh had spread over 11% of the district's total area. In Bener Meriah district, it covers 23% of the total area. There is no corporate involvement or investment in the plantation. About 78,624 households in both districts are involved independently in coffee plantations as traditional farmers and collectors, without any sophisticated technology

involved. Both districts produce 270,835 tons of coffee beans or 40% of the national production. Because of its international market value, coffee is now the primary income source for the local people.¹³

Coffee, along with several other plantations such as cabbages and potatoes, was first introduced by the Dutch colonial government in the early twentieth century. The Dutch mainly brought Javanese to the area to work on coffee and tea plantations and to tap resin trees.¹⁴ Later, according to some elderly Gayo people, some joined the labor force. However, most of them remained in the resistance movement against Dutch colonialism.

According to the local oral history that authors collected from Gayo elders, the Dutch did not educate Gayo workers about coffee and its economic value. The Dutch hired Gayo people only for specific tasks unrelated to collecting or processing coffee beans; they worked on clearing land for plantations and tapping resin trees. Javanese were the primary workers for harvesting coffee beans and tea plantations. The Dutch informed the Gayo that only the coffee tree's leaves could be consumed as a beverage. Additionally, they stated that coffee beans cannot be consumed or drunk. Based on that information, Gayo people in the past picked and dried the oldest leaves of the coffee tree. They boiled and served the dried leaves in the same manner as traditional tea. Because they believed it was coffee, they called it "*kahwah*" or "*këwë*," a word derived from the Arabic "*qahwa*" (coffee).

According to Lewa, whom I met Lewa in July 2015 in his late 80s and was a wing troop commander of the Darul Islam movement in Central Aceh (Aceh Ulama resistance movement against the newly formed Indonesia Republic),¹⁵ they realized the economic value of coffee beans when he and his troops visited Bireuen, the closest coastal Acehese

¹³ BPS Bener Meriah, "Kabupaten Bener Meriah Dalam Angka 2018," Annual Report (Bener Meriah: Badan Pusat Statistik Kabupaten Bener Meriah, 2018), 191, <https://benermeriahkab.bps.go.id/publication/2018/08/16/d89d936e4607be96a60ab5f9/kabupaten-bener-meriah-dalam-angka-2018.html>; BPS Kabupaten Aceh Tengah, "Kabupaten Aceh Tengah Dalam Angka 2018," Annual Report (Takengon: Badan Pusat Statistik Kabupaten Aceh Tengah, 2018), 8,181-182, <https://acehtengahkab.bps.go.id/publication/2018/08/16/914cfdecdd74bd8ae0a70ca8/kabupaten-aceh-tengah-dalam-angka-2018.html>; Humas, "Menjaga Kualitas Kopi Gayo," government, Biro Humas dan Protokol Pemerintah Aceh, June 29, 2019, <https://humas.acehprov.go.id/menjaga-kualitas-kopi-gayo/>.

¹⁴ John R. Bowen, *Sumatran Politics and Poetics: Gayo History, 1900-1989* (New Haven, Conn, etc: Yale University Press, 1991), 79-79.

¹⁵ Darul Islam was an Aceh ulama revolt led by Daud Beureueh. The revolt was triggered by a broken promise of Sukarno, the first president of the newly formed Republic of Indonesia, who assured Aceh ulama that once Indonesia became an independent state from the Dutch colonialists, Aceh would be allowed to enforce Shari'a law. The Shari'a was the main condition if Sukarno wanted Aceh to join the war against the Dutch in post-Japanese colonialism and became part of the Indonesian Republic after the independence. *For detailed discussions, see Eric Eugene Morris, Islam and Politics in Aceh: A Study of Center-Periphery Relations in Indonesia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983); M Nur El Ibrahimy, *Teungku Muhammad Daud Beureueh: Perannya Dalam Pergolakan Di Aceh* (Jakarta: PT. Gunung Agung, 1986); Nazaruddin Sjamsuddin, *The Republican Revolt: A Study of the Acehese Rebellion* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1985).

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settlement to the Central Aceh district. In Bireun, he saw traders buying Robusta coffee beans at a reasonable price. Once they returned to Gayo, they took coffee seeds from the abandoned Dutch coffee plantations and started growing them on their land. Coffee re-emerged as a new economic resource in the area after being abandoned by the Dutch and replaced by the Japanese, who colonized the area. Gradually, coffee equaled rice fields' importance and became today's most important economic resource in Central Aceh and Bener Meriah districts.

Coffee plantations are located outside of clans' territory¹⁶ (clan, locally known as *belah* or communal division). Gayo people are required to clear land in the highlands and, even better, further into forestry areas. The higher the altitude, the better the quality of coffee. Coffee plantations are geographically distinct from rice fields, the Gayo people's earliest traditional plantations. Wet rice fields are cultivated in valleys and are essential to the *belah*'s territory.

Traditionally, a *belah*'s settlement is located in the middle of the wet rice field. The settlement and rice field must be close to the water sources, may it be a river or lake that supports the community's life and streams water to the wet rice field. This traditional territory can be observed from the topography of old villages in Central Aceh and Bener Meriah districts, such as villages in Kebayakan, Linge, Samar Kilang, and Isak subdistricts, which are situated around the Lake of Lot Tawar and by the riverside. Forestry areas are traditionally places for hunting and *membúngë* (harvesting the forest).

Coffee has become more popular among the Gayo community since it provides flexibility and additional economic value. For such reasons, the Gayonese people expanded the plantation into forested areas, which led to deforestation. Initially, a group of men from one town commuted from their home village to clear land in the forest. When the coffee developed after at least two years, they brought their families and opted to live permanently on the plantation. Later, more families and individuals from various *belahs* joined the first settlers.

The settlers usually keep their attachment to their origin *belah* by adopting the name of their origin *belah* for naming their new settlement. One or two words are added to

¹⁶ Clan or *běläh* in the Gayonese people context is a small number of people living in a particular small area. They might neighbour with the other clans or settle quite remote from them. A member of the clan does not have blood ties with the rest of the members. Their marriage is also an endogamy. They are bound as a social division based on the agreement in the past.

differentiate the original *belah* from the new one. For example, Bathin Baru (New Bathin) village in Bener Meriah district today hints that the first settlers came from the Jongkok Bathin village of Central Aceh district. Migrants brought by the Dutch in the past or through the national transmigration program named their settlements in Javanese. Naming settlements by name and language of origin identifies the origin of the population in many areas of Aceh Tengah and Bener Meriah districts.

These new settlements gradually expanded as more people from the same and different *belahs* joined. They eventually formed a village community. These settlers shifted their affiliations and allegiances from their administrative and political divisions of origin to the new settlements. They established a new culture and social order that followed the general ideas of Gayo culture, yet each member still relatively maintained cultural ties to the original *belahs*, one of which was by prohibiting marriage between members of *belah*. This prohibition is built around the idea of '*se asal*' (from one origin) or '*sara ine*' (from one mother). Those in their seventies living in the forest or mountain areas are mostly the second generation of the first settlers.

2. *Marriage Patterns in Gayo: The Coffee's Impact on Gender Power Relations*

The internal migration for the new economic sources gradually changes the marriage pattern from patrifocal to neolocal marriage. This change increases the significance of the daughter for family and siblings, which leads to the customization of Islamic family law.

In the early days of coffee plantation expansion, there were two marriage patterns in Gayo: patrilocal and uxorilocal. Both are endogamous marriage patterns. After marriage, the couple married in patrilocal and lived in the husband's family and social circle. After having one or two children, they might raise their own family in a separate house, built next to the husband's parents' house or, at least, in the same neighborhood with the husband's parents and *belah*.¹⁷ Patrilocal marriages give greater power to the husband in the household. It also allows the husband's parents to intervene significantly in the household. Locally, this marriage pattern is known as *jüelën* or *anggö* (sell or take) or, according to Snouck Hurgronje, *bëli* and *jüel* (buy and sell). *Jüelën* or *jüel* is when a woman is 'sold' to a man. Whereas *anggö* or *bëli* is when a man "takes" or "buys" a woman as a wife.¹⁸

¹⁷ C. Snouck Hurgronje, *Tanah Gayo dan penduduknya*, Seri INIS; XXV (Jakarta: INIS, 1996), 64.

¹⁸ A.Sy Coubat, *Adat Perkawinan Gayo: Kerje Beraturen* (Jakarta: PNRI & Balai Pustaka, 1984), 20–25; Snouck Hurgronje, *Tanah Gayo dan penduduknya*, 230–31.

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Uxorilocal marriage, known locally as *angkap* (adoptive marriages), occurs when a man moves in with the woman's family and community. Although this is an uncommon practice in Gayo, the man has the potential to become the area's ruler. Bowen found this marriage pattern was frequent in Lokop Serbajadi, a Gayonese settlement on the boundary between present-day East Aceh and Bener Meriah districts.¹⁹ Generally, the uxori-local was typically practiced in three instances: First, when the groom could not pay the full dowry. As a result, he had to live in the bride's house and work for the wife's father until the payment was completed. The husband's affiliation had to be temporarily transferred from his *belah* to his wife's. The second case, still practiced today, is when a family has no sons and does not wish to be separated from their daughters by patrilocal marriage. To avoid separation, parents choose to adopt a bridegroom and provide him with occupation. In the past, parents rarely adopted a Gayonese man. They prefer non-Gayonese people visiting the area like the Acehese practicing matrilocality.²⁰ The third, which was also rarely practiced, was *angkap nasab*, in which parents adopt a man by marrying him to one of the daughters in the house. The adopted man had the right to claim inheritance like a biological son was supposed to have.²¹ Another situation that led to *angkap nasab* in the past was that the man must have good character and qualities and fit the community's expectations in religious affairs. One family in the community would marry him with their daughter to keep him in the village to teach the local people religious knowledge and skills. He would also be given a portion of land cultivated by villagers for him. From the oral histories we collected, the man usually came from the western part of Aceh province.

Except for *angkap nasab*, anyone who comes to the village, whether patrilocal or uxori-local, cannot lawfully claim inheritance. Previously, the inherited property was the rice field tied to *belahs* and ancestry. In such cases, the land was considered joint property. Those who left the village because of marriage, usually women under the patrilocal marriage system, would lose their rights over the land.²² In addition, Snouck recorded that even by uxori-local marriage, a woman did not have property except that she earned individually or gifts from her

¹⁹ Bowen, *Sumatran Politics and Poetics*, 36.

²⁰ Snouck Hurgronje, *Tanah Gayo dan penduduknya*; Coubat, *Adat Perkawinan Gayo: Kerje Beraturen*.

²¹ Coubat, *Adat Perkawinan Gayo: Kerje Beraturen*, 27; Sahdansyah Putra Jaya, "Sistem Kekerabatan Suku Gayo Bukan Patrilineal Murni – Lintas Gayo," News, April 20, 2014, <http://www.lintasgayo.com/47921/sistem-kekerabatan-suku-gayo-bukan-patrilineal-murni.html>.

²² John R. Bowen, "The Transformation of an Indonesian Property System: 'Adat,' Islam, and Social Change in the Gayo Highlands," *American Ethnologist* 15, no. 2 (1988): 278,282-283.

husband or son.²³ According to Alyasa Abubakar, a Professor of Islamic jurisprudence at State Islamic University in Banda Aceh and a Gayonese himself, said that although a daughter could not claim inheritance in the past, she was given a buffalo or horse upon marriage. These domesticated animals were more valuable than land, which could be cleaned and claimed easily in the past and is still relatively today. The animals were functional and marketable and could be sources of capital in her new place. In line with this, Yusen Saleh, a former head of the customary body, adds that the economic worth of domesticated animals has been broadly stable until recently. He asserts that when he was a teenager, his parents only needed to sell three buffaloes to fund their pilgrimage to Mecca to perform the hajj. The number of buffaloes for funding the hajj remains the same still today.

The development of the coffee plantations, leading to the new practice of residency of marriage pattern (neolocal), has changed the relationship between genders in the Gayo community. This new form of residential pattern is locally known as *k sö kini* (there and here) marriage as more and more Gayo people migrate from their settlements to the plantations. There, they build new settlements and make their children an equally important part of their fathers' and mothers' extended families. In the past, due to patrilocal marriages, only sons were essential to parents. The daughter was '*juelen*' (sold) because of the marriage practice. She could not possess any inherited property as she was given domestic animals as a marriage gift.

The new neolocal pattern gives wives freedom from the social ties and interventions of the husband's family and community. This allows the wife's parents to intervene in their daughter's family and always try to get close to them because they hope their daughter will be their caregiver in the future. This parental support becomes her power to negotiate within her household and decide the family affairs. The husband's intervention at home decreases and has less influence over his children as the wife dominates and her parents always try to get closer to them. The space and autonomy in the family and the support from the parents contribute to the high demand for divorce in the local religious court since the wife has support from her family. This will be briefly described in the last section of this article.

The changes in residential and marriage patterns in Gayo and other residential and marriage patterns in other parts of Muslim societies show that there is no standard for Islamic family and residential patterns for the Muslim community. Islam, as amm da Abd al- argues, does not constitute particular residential and marriage forms since the mutual

²³ Snouck Hurgronje, *Tanah Gayo dan penduduknya*, 268.

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expectation is expressed and fulfilled. Instead of leading the Muslim community to particular marriage and residential patterns, Islamic law allows the diversity of cultural and political practices and social arrangement, morals, lineage, and kinship systems. Islamic law does not tightly govern these aspects as it rests on the principle of “liberty” and “permissible.”²⁴ As shown in the previous case of *Pusako Tinggi* of Minangkabau society, under both principles, High *Pusako* has been maintained to assure the continuation of the matrilineal and matriarchal systems in contemporary Minangkabau society. Most critically, it maintains Islam's significance and role among them.²⁵

In Gayo, the change in residential patterns leads to the construction of a new Islamic family law concept and practice. Law is adjusted to a new social system that constitutes a new social need to maintain harmony in their family. It is the only social support left after they ended their affiliation with their *belah* community. As Abd al- points argues, while Islamic law endeavors to “moralize” legal action and formalities by placing them in the context of religion and morality, it tends to lose the formalization of religious and moral rules. This may be connected to the designation of social control as ultimately righteous.²⁶ The customized Islamic law in Gayo, supporting the changing social arrangement, passed through intense debates and negotiations between Muslim scholars, nationalist groups, and *adat* (traditional) leaders since the Dutch colonial time and is still ongoing.

3. *Islamization and Legal Change*

The invention of the new economic source coincided with three significant events in Gayo: the increasing Islamization, the Darul Islam revolt against the newly formed Indonesian Republic, and the establishment of a religious and civil court in the Central Aceh district. Islamization had started gradually since the coming of the Dutch to Gayo. The influx of people from other islands in the East Indies (present-day Indonesia) brought by the Dutch and the construction of the road connecting Gayo inhabiting the central part of Aceh to the coastal area for transporting agricultural products inspired more Gayonese people to go to other places to study Islam. When they returned to Gayo, they led Islamic and social discourses. The most prominent figures of these groups were Damanhuri (died in 1942) and Abdul Jali (died in 1976). Damanhuri, known as Tëngkü Silang, graduated from Pulo Kiton Islamic

²⁴ Abd al- , *The Family Structure in Islam*, 16–22.

²⁵ Hamka, *Adat Minangkabau menghadapi revolusi*, 7–8; Abubakar, *Metode Istislahiah: Pemamfaatan Ilmu Pengetahuan Dalam Ushul Fiqh*, 202.

²⁶ Abd al- , *The Family Structure in Islam*, 17.

boarding school in Bireuen district of Aceh Province district today and Candung in West Sumatra. He built the traditional Islamic school of *Tarbiyah Islamiyah* (Islamic Education) in Jongok Bathin village of Kebanyakan sub-district today. Meanwhile, Abdul Jali studied in the reformist Islamic school of *Persatuan Islam* (Islamic Union) in Bandung. The school took the al-Manar publication founded by Muhammad Abduh and Rashid Ridha (among prominent Muslim reformers) as a main reference and a starting point for their discussions. Abdul Jalil was inspired by this idea of Islamic reform and purification, campaigned by Muhammad Abduh and Rashid Ridha in the Middle East. In 1937, Abdul Jalil and those who returned from Al Irshad in Bandung to Gayo founded *Taman Pendidikan Islam* (Garden for Islamic Education). The school used Arabic as the main instruction.²⁷

During the Dutch colonial, the local Muslim scholars' major innovation was the classification of adat into four categories. They were *Adat Islamiyah* (adat elements that were in line with Islamic teachings), *Adat Muhakammah* (adat elements sourced from the consensus that could be considered as regulation and law), *Adat Jahiliya* (adat elements that opposed Islamic teaching, such as practicing black magic) and *Resam* (innovation on specific matters of communal life agreed and applied only in a particular locality). This adat classification was aimed at separating non-Islamic practices from the adat.²⁸ There was no record of whether Islamization during the Dutch colonial period changed local law and practices related to family matters.

During Japanese colonialism (1942-1945), Islamization did not progress. Japanese was considered more offensive toward local tradition and belief than the Dutch.²⁹ They prohibited Gayonese people from practicing local culture and religious teachings. Although it was considered a “dark moment” for adat/culture, Muslim scholars and nationalist groups in post-independence Indonesia saw it as great momentum to eliminate the adat and replace it with more Islamic tradition. Nonetheless, there was no clear and unifying idea about what it meant with the Islamic tradition in their efforts to create an Islamic society in Gayo. Islamic groups associated adat with a non-Islamic practice that should be removed from daily life. Nationalists associated the adat with the pro-Dutch domain that did not fit the idea of modernity that came with the newly formed Indonesian Republic. Meanwhile, at the

²⁷ Bowen, *Sumatran Politics and Poetics*, 94,97,99; Mukhlis PaEni, *Riak di laut tawar: kelanjutan tradisi dalam perubahan sosial di Gayo-Aceh Tengah*, Cet. 1.. (Jakarta: Arsip Nasional Republik Indonesia, 2003), 184,187,188.

²⁸ A.R Hakim Aman Pinan, “Pelestarian Budaya Tradisional Masyarakat Pendukungnya” (Unpublished, 1997).

²⁹ A.R Hakim Aman Pinan, *Pesona Tanah Gayo*, ed. Nasaruddin and Aqli H (Takengon: Pemerintah Kabupaten Aceh Tengah, 2003), 15–19.

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grassroots level, village rulers interpreted the “new Islamic tradition” by their diverse understandings.³⁰

Although there was no uniting concept on the new Islamic tradition to replace adat in post-independent Indonesia, local Muslim scholars successfully eliminated some adat practices in marriage. In 1946, the scholars introduced *mahr* (dowry or marriage payment system in Islamic tradition), replacing the former payment system entwined with the rank of bride father: The higher the rank of the bride’s father, the more expensive the dowry would be. The scholars also prohibited payment made by parents of the bride and groom to their respective village rulers.³¹

In the late 1950s, a religious court was set up in Central Aceh. It boosted Islamization in Gayo. Among the important discourses of Islamization was the inheritance division. Judges of religious and district courts played an important role in the process. At the time, most judges of religious court were of Gayo origin. They were considered scholars in Islamic studies, familiar with local adat, social and political dynamics, and the Darul Islam’s demand to create a new society based on Islam.³² Their background relatively eased the Islamization process.

In the early period, the judges lacked judicial authority and infrastructure supporting their works. They were also puzzled about whether to affirm Islamic law or reaffirm adat. Re-affirming adat would contradict the mission carried out by local Muslim scholars many of whom were involved in the ulama led Darul Islam revolt. Applying Islamic law would also trigger protest and resistance from the Gayonese people and Adat leaders, who were subject to their legal practice in the courtrooms. The judges had to negotiate with such a situation. They avoided introducing standard Islamic law during a case proceeding nor did they reaffirm adat law. Instead, they led the disputants to a familial consensus outside of the courtroom, in which legal reasoning with reference to adat and Islamic law were interplayed. The judges, local imam, and adat elites were also involved in the deliberation, which often concluded equal share between brother and sister. Until the 1970s, the judge continued practicing the property division following the new legal concept and practice in inheritance division. Even though a decision through consensus was brought to either the religious court or a civil court to be re-

³⁰ Bowen, *Sumatran Politics and Poetics*, 102–11.

³¹ Bowen, 111.

³² Bowen, “The Transformation of an Indonesian Property System,” 281.

divided based on Islamic law, judges of both courts rejected invalidating past property division.³³

During the ulama revolt of Darul Islam, inspired by the new economic source, the religious court judges introduced *Poroh* (jointly earned wealth that must be divided equally after divorce). The judge's decision was supported by Muslim scholars joining the force of the Darul Islam movement, who argued that Islam intended such division. Judges of the civil court, who come from outside the region, also introduced the same equal division in their verdict, although inconsistently. The judges recognized claims of shared labor for the earned wealth. In 1959, following the expansion of coffee plantation that was not tied to ancestry and communal land, judges no longer recognized a claim based on the marriage states or village affiliation. This new division system replaced the old practice in which those who came to the village, either patrilocal or uxorilocal, would not get a share of the earned wealth.³⁴

Today, when coffee plantations are the primary source of labor, the *poroh* division system is practiced both in the courtroom and the community. It is now considered tradition or adat. Gayonese people, whom authors have encountered in Central Aceh, Bener Meriah, and Banda Aceh, are familiar with *poroh* and practice it in their families. The outcome of familial consensus is then presented to the court for validation and the National Land Agency to certify the shared land.

Judges also promoted bilateral inheritance in their verdicts, putting aside many early property distributions. In the old practice, a woman married patrilocal would not receive any property because she received the bride's goods during the marriage. According to Alyasa Abubakar, the Gayonese professor at the State Islamic University of Ar-Raniry, and Jamhuri, a Gayonese representative to the Provincial Council of Adat, a woman also was given a water buffalo or a horse by her parents when she left for a patrilocal residential form of marriage. It was considered part of the inheritance since wet rice field could not be taken as capital for living outside of the village. As previously stated, these animals were more expensive than the land, which still could be obtained easily.

Culturally, in Gayo patrilocal marriages, the eldest brother, who replaces and takes the role of father after his death, has strong control over the left property. According to Bowen, the brother's domination over land and property was challenged by judges in both religious

³³ Bowen, 281; John R. Bowen, "'You May Not Give It Away': How Social Norms Shape Islamic Law in Contemporary Indonesian Jurisprudence," *Islamic Law and Society* 5, no. 3 (1998): 382–408; John R. Bowen, "Consensus and Suspicion: Judicial Reasoning and Social Change in an Indonesian Society 1960-1994," *Law & Society Review* 34, no. 1 (2000): 278,281-283.

³⁴ Bowen, "The Transformation of an Indonesian Property System," 278,281-283.

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and civil courts. The religious court eventually eliminated this practice. The religious court adopted bilateral inheritance in their decisions and presented the practice on religious grounds. This new division was incorporated in their formal decisions on a familial basis to enhance the Islamization of *adat* in the village, which was also endorsed by the local ulama.³⁵

Land ownership also gradually changed after the state promoted land certification and ownership through agrarian law No. 5/1960. Since then, the land was gradually unrelated to the village and ancestry. The land is either owned by an individual or the state. This ownership changes the practice of *adat* in inheritance division from being related to maintaining a link to ancestry to maintaining a kin tie. This new development is in line with the principle of Islamic law in inherited property that suggests transferring individual ownership to the right heir. However, Gayonese people does not follow this development by practicing the 2:1 division for siblings following the standard Islamic division. Instead, for the sake of kinship unity and harmony, Gayonese people customizes the law to reach fairness and keep harmony and kin ties to maintain continuity of support and other social capital. As a result, instead of dividing the land 2:1 for brother and sister respectively, they opt to divide the property equally between brother and sister with extra portions given to those who contribute more to caregiving their parents.

The following section portrays the current practice of customized law in the inheritance division. It shows the changing legal practice in a society that suggests the shift of gender relationships from patrilocality to matrifocality, in which a man/bother and woman/sister share space, responsibility, and recognition, to achieve mutual expectation.

4. Customizing Islamic Law in Inheritance Division: A Case Study

During the fieldwork in 2009, Fatimah shared that she and her siblings divided four hectares of wet rice fields that were inherited from their parents. They were a family of nine: five brothers and four sisters. One of them had passed away before the land division. Others live in various villages in Central Aceh. Fatimah lives in Takengen, the district capital, which is about 6 km from her natal village, Mendale of Kebayakan subdistrict. Being mediated by the headman of Mendale village and witnessed by their uncle, they divided the wet rice field among themselves equally. Saifullah, the youngest brother and current village *imam*, received an additional portion of the share. It was a gift from his other siblings in appreciation of his

³⁵ Bowen, 282–84.

assistance in caring for their mother, who suffered from a stroke for the rest of her life. Due to the distance between their residences and their hectic schedules, they could not contribute as much as Saifullah for the care of their sick mother.

Fatimah's siblings did not divide the land based on the fixed provision of Islamic law, which is a 2:1 division for brothers and sisters, respectively. They took familial consensus and agreed to distribute the land equally. They excluded their parents' house with a small garden surrounding it and a house that was built on land that was once a swamp. This family consensus concluded that each got 18x6 meters square. House, 11.25x18 square meters, and a small garden surrounding the house, 11.75x18 square meters, were given to Saifullah who took care of their mother. The house on the former swamp, 7x16 square meters, was sold for IDR. 500,000 (five hundred thousand rupiah) to Aminah, the youngest sister. It was a formality for claiming ownership of the house and a symbolic sale as the price was far below the market price. The money was donated to the mosque on behalf of their ancestors. They also agreed that the land could only be sold to their internal extended family in the future. All the divisions could be claimed after the death of their mother in 2011. Before that, the wet rice field was cultivated by Saifullah on behalf of their mother.

Fatimah's father also had left two hectares of coffee plantation. Fatimah's mother continued cultivating the coffee plantation until she was no longer productive in the late 1990s. The coffee plantation was then distributed only to sisters. According to Fatimah, and her other siblings - Saifullah and Ibn Thahir - the coffee plantation was bequeathed only to daughters because their father privileged the sons with education. Such privilege was not given to daughters because of the economic situation in the past. According to them, their father thought that his sons should be educated and therefore become wise in the time when they become breadwinners and heads of their families. Education also helped them to find work and collect more property. Three of Fatimah's brothers completed university degrees. Two other brothers (Ibn Thahir and Saifullah) only completed senior high school and were reluctant to go to the university although they were forced to do so. Fatimah and the other three sisters only finished elementary school. The sisters then stopped their ambition for education to assist their parents in raising funds for the brothers' education. They cultivated the coffee plantation, and paddy field, and engaged in *mëbúngë* (harvesting the forest).

During the land division, the brothers acknowledged the contribution of their sisters. Saifullah, the village imam at the time of this research, did not argue against the equal division and the rights of his sisters on coffee plantations, although he was familiar with the standard division formula of Islamic law for inheritance. With the bequeathed coffee

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plantation, Fatimah and other sisters got more portion of land than their brothers, who only got a portion of a wet rice field as a result of equal division in inheritance division. Iskandar, the oldest brother, said that looking back at the economic development in the past, he and his other brothers would not be able to complete bachelor's degrees and work as civil servants today without the contribution from their sisters. Iskandar emphasized that the extra land for their sisters was not enough to show their gratitude for their sisters. However, these are the only property left by their father. He states that "other kinds of appreciation would be delivered individually by each brother. Collectively, the brothers expressed their appreciation to sisters during the inheritance division by not claiming their right over the coffee plantation and wet paddy field."

Fatimah's siblings highlight non-material aspects of the legal practice. The caregiving to the parents and access to education were not considered in Islamic law but are more vital for them than the property. When the authors asked Saifullah whether the practice was relevant to Islamic law, he argued with the following statement:

..... What law?! Islamic law is not the essence of Islam. Islamic law is only one of many paths to God. Although the Quran commands inheritance, it should only be utilized as a last resort when we cannot organize ourselves or confront a deadlocked situation. *Tawhid* (the unity of God) is the essence of Islam. By dividing the land equally and giving our sisters a larger share of the inheritance, we are not betraying the fundamental principles of Islam. Islam enables us to reach an accord within the bounds of Islamic doctrine. The established law only comes into effect when we cannot draw closer to God. Our inheritance division makes us closer to God and keeps our siblings united and in harmony.

According to Saifullah, avoiding the standard formula of Islamic inheritance division was required to protect kinship unity. He stated that the standard Islamic law has the potential to lead to conflict and separation, which could be prevented through familial consensus structured within the most fundamental Islamic beliefs. According to Saifullah, the standard Islamic law is rigid and should only be used as a last resort in dispute resolution. Although their practice may violate Islamic law, they considered it consistent with other Islamic teachings concerning unity and harmony.

Achyar, Fatimah's husband, and his siblings also divided the inheritance equally among them. In the early time of Indonesia's independence, their father migrated internally from Jongkok Bathin of Central Aceh to Bathin Baru of Bener Meriah district to open a coffee plantation. In 1994, he passed away and left 37,482.5 square meters of coffee plantation.

Achyar and his siblings distributed a more significant portion to two siblings, 6.750 square meters each, for their contribution in caring for father and plantation. Others got 3.426 square meters each.

According to Hidayat Syah, an imam in Jongok Bathin village who is Achyar's younger brother and Saifullah's mentor, equitable distribution is prevalent in Central Aceh and Bener Meriah districts. He is familiar with and appreciates the Shafi school of law, which considers culture as another source of law as long as it does not contradict Islam's fundamental principle. According to his interpretation, the Shafi school of law provides them with more flexibility, supporting their independence and creativity to produce legal reasoning based on the Quran, prophet tradition, and their actual needs.

In the two cases above, this locally contextualized Islamic law is critical to supporting social change and reformulating power relations between genders within the Gayo Muslim community. It reinforces kinship as the fundamental and more meaningful social capital, which positions women/girls as equally important in that new social arrangement—referring to Abd al- argument mentioned previously that the contextualized Islamic law on the property (wealth acquired during marriage and inheritance) is an attempt to place legal action, morality and emotion framed within the teachings and morality of Islam that ultimately entitles women to inherited property. This is all directed at reorganizing the social capital they have left to rely on after losing the support of their community of origin, which is aimed at placing the social designation as the ultimate righteous.

Islamic law adapted to the distribution of inherited and acquired property appears to be a common practice in Central Aceh. The following table shows a few property disputes heard in the local religious court. In 2011-2014, there were less than ten cases each year relating to joint property and the division of inherited property. The courts heard fewer common property cases than divorce. The data below also demonstrates that the number of divorces filed by women as plaintiffs is higher than those filed by husbands.

Year	Type of Dispute Tried at Religious Court of Takengen, Central Aceh, Indonesia			
	Shared Property	Inheritance	<i>Cerai Talak</i> (Formal divorce request at the Islamic court by a husband)	<i>Cerai Gugat</i> (Formal divorce request at the Islamic court by a wife)
2009	7	2	134	209
2010	9	6	170	231
2011	6	10	237	307
2012	7	1	137	161
2013	2	1	105	175
2014	2	6	98	210

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The data was collected in 2015 from the Religious Court (Mahkamah Syar'iyah) of Central Aceh

5. *Changing Residential Pattern Changing the Role of Daughter*

As previously mentioned, the feminized Islamic law on inheritance and neolocal practices promote the importance of daughters in a family for their aging parents. After losing the support from the original community of *Belah*, Gayo's parents see only their nuclear and extended family as the only social capital that remains. This increases the significance of the daughter, from which they were considered less important than the son as they would marry in patrilocal tradition. In the new residential pattern of neolocal, daughters are expected to be caregivers of aging parents. For that purpose, parents give their daughters more care, protection, and attention than their sons. In return, parents of Gayonese expect their daughters always to stay closer to them. In doing so, parents would intervene in their daughter's life and future, which eventually limits the daughter's mobility and freedom. Something the son would not experience much from their parents. Consequently, this results in gender discrimination within the family.

As we closely engaged with Fatimah's nuclear and extended family, we found that she, a mother of 6 children and a successful trader, exercised more authority in the household than her husband, Ahyar. She started the business in the 1980s and, over time, earned more income than her husband, working as an official in one of the local government agencies. Although working as a civil servant, her husband supported her business. He always managed to assist Fatimah's business anytime available. At least he would be in the market after office hours.

During our ethnographical observation and discussion with her children, the authors learned that Fatimah exercised more power in the house than his husband. Almost all household decisions come from her. She showed more protection and intervention in her daughter's life than in her son's. That includes education and to whom they could marry. That intervention annoyed the daughters, who felt they were being discriminated. Such authority was also shown by Fatimah's and Achyar's sisters living neolocal both in the city center and in rural areas. Their role and authority as mothers overrule the authority of their husbands over household affairs and children's caretaking and future. The husbands considered the breadwinner, gives up almost everything about the household related to their wives.

The feminized practice of Islamic law increased financial autonomy, and parents' protection strengthens women's role in the household and authority in deciding the future of their marriage. As shown in the table above, women in Gayo society are becoming more

determined and autonomous in their marriages. One case of this is, again, from Fatimah's daughter, who married an immigrant. The marriage was *angkap* practice. However, her daughter passed through a disappointing marriage. Her siblings suggested she divorce her husband to avoid a worse marriage situation. Undoubtedly, Fatimah also intervened and suggested the divorce and was ready to take care of her again and two grandchildren from her daughter's marriage. More than two years after the initial marriage evaluation, eventually, the daughter filed a divorce request to the court, which was granted.

According to Yusdarita, a prominent women's activist from Bener Meriah, and some elderlies living in the capital of Central Aceh, financial autonomy (particularly for the civil servants and businesswomen), kinship support, and sibling affection are among the major factors that lead to the increasing request for divorce at the local religious court.

The increasing role of wives and their confidence in the household begins with the intervention of the wife's parents in her household and their efforts to bring their daughter's family closer to them. This was impossible in the past of patrilocal marriages in which the daughter would be separated from their parents. We learned from many local oral histories that the "*juel* or *bëli*" marriage practice took its literal meaning. According to elderly informants, such a situation happened because the travel time from one village to another was long enough due to geographical, road, and transportation conditions. For example, it took more than six hours to reach Pondok Baru of Bener Meriah today from Takengen, which today only takes 45 minutes maximum by car. Common transportation in the past was horse or water buffalo carts. And few had these domestic animals in the past due to their market price. In such a situation, when the daughter left the house after marriage, she would be assumed to be leaving the house forever.

The parents can now step in and help the daughter's family in the neolocal residential pattern but could practice the same in their son's family. Son is more independent and culturally perceived as not being attributed with caring and loving as much as the daughter to their parents. Once the son gets married, he will focus on his family, in which his wife's parents often intervene. From some informants, we heard that the daughter's parents would even practice black magic, trying to spell their daughters' husbands to give more attention, particularly economic support, than to his biological parents. This development is common in matrilineal communities and developed areas in other parts of Indonesia. The intervention of the wife's parents enables women to exercise power within the family.³⁶

³⁶ Rammohan and Johar, "The Determinants of Married Women's Autonomy in Indonesia."

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C. Conclusion

This article shows that economic development is not the only factor contributing to the emerging practice of matrifocality. Islamic law, as an essential reference for any form of Muslim society, is integral in promoting and sustaining the continuity of matrifocality practice in a Muslim community. The invention of coffee plantations, now the primary economic source, has forced the Gayonese people to migrate internally and rearrange their social organization and social capital, of which the power relationship between gender is a fundamental part. This new social arrangement allowed women to assert their authority in the household as she was freed from their husband's community intervention in the patrilocal marriage tradition.

The new economic development happened once with increasing Islamization in the Gayo. Instead of affirming patriarchal tradition, local Muslim scholars, later supported by the presence of both religious and civil courts, promote gender equality in familial aspects. This polishes matrifocality in Gayo, in which women gain their space to assert their authority in the household, rights over inherited property, and recognition from their kinship. The neolocal resident promoting matrifocality also increases the presence of the wife's parents in the family, who try to make their daughter's family closer to them. In turn, this increases the wife's confidence in deciding the future of her marriage.

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