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Legal Certainty in Customary Jurisdictions (Case Study In Muara Batu District, North Aceh)

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Abstract

Introduction: Gampongs or villages in Aceh province are the only village-level government in Indonesia that is given the authority to resolve a number of civil and criminal cases through customary courts in gampongs.

Purposes of the Research: This paper examines the legal certainty of customary court decisions in gampongs in the Muara Batu sub-district, North Aceh. The problems resolved in this paper are regarding the legal certainty of customary court decisions in gampongs and the extent to which gampongs in Muara Batu District implement customary justice in gampongs.

Methods of the Research: This research is an empirical research. The data were collected from field data through interviews and observations as well as documentary data from legal writings.

Results of the Research: The results of the research show that the decisions of the customary courts are binding and final. However, if the parties disagree with the customary court decision and seek legal proceedings, the customary court decision can become written evidence. In Muara Batu sub-district, each gampong has a customary court, but if they are related to minor crimes or jinayat, the gampong apparatus prefers to hand over the case to the authorities, if a peaceful process is not found. Except for cases of immoral khalwat and adultery committed in the gampong, the perpetrators are forced to marry or handed over to law enforcement to be processed according to jinayat law in Aceh.

1. INTRODUCTION

The gampong or village in Aceh province is the only village-level government in Indonesia that is given the authority to resolve certain disputes through the customary court in the gampong. This privilege, aside from the historical factor of customary justice in Aceh, is also legalized by legal regulations in Indonesia.¹ In Article 13 paragraph (3) of Qanun Aceh Number 9 of 2008 concerning the development of customary life and customs, it is stated that law enforcement officials provide an opportunity so that disputes that occur in gampong are resolved first according to Gampong custom.²

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¹ Debora Sanur, "Implementation of Special Autonomy Policies in Aceh Implementation of Special Autonomy Policies in Aceh," *Jurnal Politica: Masalah Politik Dalam Negeri dan Hubungan Internasional* 11, no. 1 (2020): 65–83. doi: 10.22212/jp.v11i1.1580.

² Hazar Kusmayanti, "Strengthening Aceh's Customary Courts For Enforcement Of Civil Procedure Law In Indonesia." *Journal of Positive School Psychology*, 6, no. 6 (2022): 3405-3411.

However, not all criminal or civil matters can be resolved by the customary court in Gampong Aceh. In Article 13 paragraph (1) of Qanun Number 9 of 2008 concerning fostering customary life and customs, it is stated that there are 18 issues that can be resolved in customary courts at the gampong level.³ Technically, the procedure for resolving disputes according to Gampong customs has been regulated in the Joint Decree of the Governor of Aceh, the Head of the Aceh Regional Police and the Aceh Traditional Council Number 189/667/20011, 1054/MAA/XII/2011, B/121/I/2012 regarding the Implementation of Gampong and Mukim Traditional Courts or Other Names in Aceh (SKB), which expressly states that the Gampong Customary Court Decisions are final and binding. This means that cases resolved through the Gampong Customary Court cannot be submitted to other judicial institutions. This is confirmed in the sixth dictum of the SKB as follows: "Decision of the Gampong and Mukim Customary Courts or other names in Aceh is Final and Binding and cannot be submitted again to general courts or other courts." The binding nature of the Customary Court Decision is also reaffirmed in Article 18 paragraph (1) of Pergub Aceh 60/2013 which also states the following: "Decision of the Customary Court is peaceful and binding".

In practice, there are instances where customary court decisions can be re-processed through legal remedies according to the type of case. For example, the case that happened to a Keuchik in one of the gampongs in Lhokseumawe City where after deciding a case that fell under the authority of 18 gampongs in Aceh, he was named a suspect with the offense of extortion. He stated that in the gampong where he is Keuchik, it was a mutual agreement that every pervert who had not committed adultery would be fined with an amount of money handed over to the Gampong.

However, he did not expect that his decision would lead to his being named a suspect with the offense of extortion after the perverted perpetrator reported him. Based on the data obtained, the perpetrators of customary violations report the gampong government, causing a number of gampong governments not dare implementing some of the judicial authority given to gampong. In this paper, researchers examine the legal force of customary court decisions and also the extent to which customary justice in gampongs in Muara Batu District, North Aceh applies customary justice and what obstacles are encountered in this effort.

2. METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach. The choice of a qualitative approach in this research is because this research wants to comprehensively understand the legal compliance of customary court decisions in Aceh by taking case studies in gampongs in Muara Batu District, North Aceh.⁴ In this study, researchers used normative and sociological legal methodologies. The subjects or participants in this study were the community and village government in Muara Batu District. All of the subjects were selected using a purposive sampling method because in qualitative research what is important is the accuracy of the informants and the completeness and integrity of the data with the research context.⁵ In this

³ Yusrizal, Mukhlis and N. Amalia, "Adat court vs syar'iyah court: Study of the legal culture of aceh communities completing the khalwat cases," *International Journal of Recent Technology and Engineering* 7, no. 6 (2019): 1367–1370

⁴ Suzanne E. Rowe, "Legal Research, Legal Analysis, and Legal Writing: Putting Law School into Practice," *SSRN ELibrary*, 1193, no. 2000 (2019): 1–19.Doi: http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.1223682

⁵ I Made Pasek Diantha, "*Metodologi Penelitian Hukum Normatif Dalam Justifikasi Teori Hukum*," (Jakarta: Prenanda Media Group, 2017), p. 41.

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study the data analysis techniques used were: First, the data reduction stage, in which the researcher will read the entire transcript of the results of the interviews, observations, and documents that are relevant to the research being raised so that general information will be obtained from each transcript. Second, the data presentation stage. The general messages that were revealed will then be compiled by researchers so that they become specific data (specific messages). Later, from these specific messages, the general pattern of data will be known, so that data can be grouped based on the sequence of events, categories, and typologies regarding the events raised in this study. Third, the stage of drawing conclusions and verification, namely the researcher will draw conclusions based on the findings obtained in the second stage. After drawing these initial conclusions, the researcher will collect supporting evidence to review whether the conclusions made are appropriate or not. Finally, as is common in qualitative research, analysis of case study data begins with the researcher in the field, when collecting data and when all the data has been collected

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Gampong Authority in Aceh

As a region with special authority in Indonesia, the gampong government (another name for village) in Aceh is given the authority to administer justice at the gampong level related to customary life and customs.⁶ The authority of the customary court includes civil cases such as settlement of inheritance disputes and also cases related to minor crimes. In article 13 of Qanun Number 9 of 2008 concerning the development of customary life and customs, it is stated that gampongs in Aceh can resolve the following cases: a). Disputes in the household; b). Disputes in the family related to faraids; c). Disputes between residents; d). perverted khalwat; e). Disputes about property rights; f). Theft in the family; g). Seuhareukat property disputes; h). Petty theft; i). Pet livestock theft; j). Indigenous violations regarding livestock, agriculture, and forests; k). maritime disputes; l). Disputes in the market; m). Mild abuse; n). Forest burning (on a small scale that harms indigenous communities); o), Harassment, incitement, slander, and defamation; p). Environmental pollution (small scale); q). Threats threaten (depending on the type of threat); r). Other violations that violate customs and traditions. In fact, the authority of the gampong which concerns customary justice is not limited to these 18 questions because in paragraph 18 it states "other violations that violate customs", which means that the authority of the gampong court can be extended to every matter deemed necessary to regulate. In general, the authority of the gampong is to resolve two issues, namely civil disputes and criminal disputes. This is understandable because in the perspective of Customary Law there is no difference between criminal law and civil law.7

For cases related to these customs, as stated in article 13 paragraph 3 qanun number 9 of 2008 it is stated that law enforcement officials provide an opportunity for a dispute to be resolved first by the customary court in the gampong. This means that if there is a dispute, law enforcers are obliged to provide an opportunity for the gampong government where the incident occurred to resolve the case in accordance with customary law.⁸ In the regulation of the Governor of Aceh No. 25 of 2011 stated that one of the tasks of the Geuchiek

⁶ Bewa Ragawino, "Pengantar dan Asas-Asas Hukum Adat Indonesia." (Bandung: Universitas Padjajaran, 2001), p. 45.

⁷ N. Amalia, "Model Penyelesaian Sengketa dan Peradilan Adat di Aceh" *Jurnal Hukum IUS QUIA IUSTUM*, 25, no. 1 (2018): 159-179. doi: 10.20885/iustum.vol25.iss1.art8.

⁸ Mahdi, "Existence Of Indigenous Justice In Aceh," *Hunafa: Journal of Studia Islamika* 8, no. 2 (2015): 189–215.

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is to become a gampong judge whose job is to resolve gampong problems related to disputes in the gampong. Geuchiek's authority is clarified again in Aceh Qanun No. 10 of 2008 concerning customary institutions where in article 15 is stated that Geuchiek is in charge of leading and solving social problems and being a peacemaker for disputes among gampong residents.

In this case, it becomes clear that the task of the geuchiek is as a judge at the gampong level in resolving disputes among residents. In carrying out their duties, as stated in article 14 of Qanun Aceh Number 9 of 2008 Jo. Article 16 Pergub Aceh Number 60 of 2013, Geuchiek is assisted by other parties in the gampong, namely Imum Meunasah, Tuha Peut, Gampong Secretary, Ulama, and other parties in the gampong according to the case being handled.9 In principle, customary court at the gampong level as stated in article 14 paragraph 4 of Qanun No. 9 of 2008 held at the Meunasah or Mushala Gampong which open to the public. This means that customary justice cannot be closed to the public where the main goal is related to fairness and legality of the results of the customary court decision. 10 The customary court process may be closed (article 16 paragraph 8) if the dispute involves women and children, either as perpetrators or victims, then the implementation will be carried out behind closed doors at one of the traditional leader's houses such as Geuchik, Tuha Peuet, or at the Geuchiek office. Regarding the procedures for implementing customary justice, as regulated in Article 15 of Qanun Number 9 of 2008 it is stated that the procedures and conditions for settling disputes are carried out in accordance with local customary provisions. This article implies that the formal law relating to the trial process is fully adapted to local custom.

In its implementation, as explained by Fajri, Geuchik Cot Seurani, the process of customary justice must not conflict with Islamic law. For example, in an accusation of adultery, witnesses cannot be less than 4 (people) in accordance with Islamic law. Fajri's explanation is because in Aceh, adat and Syariah are like two unified elements, so Snouck Hurgronje said that customary law will apply if customary law is in accordance with Islamic law. In another sense, any customary rules and customary trial processes that are inconsistent with Islamic law will be rejected. The process for filing cases or customary disputes in Aceh that is usually practiced is as follows: a). Acceptance of cases by Gechiek either based on the victim's confession or caught in the act; b). Notification to Tuha Peut and Imuem Meunasah by Kechik; c). Calling and examining the parties; d). Decision deal; e). Enforcement of sanctions.

The application of sanctions is given in accordance with the disputes that occur, the losses and impacts incurred, as well as the socio-economic conditions of the parties to the dispute. In article 16 it is stated that the legal sanctions that can be applied in the customary disputes are as follows: a). Advice; b). Reprimand; c). Apology; d). Siyam; e). Diyat; f). Fine; g). Compensation; h). Ostracized by the gampong community or by another name; i). Expelled from the gampong community or by another name; j). Revocation of customary titles; and k). Other forms of sanctions in accordance with local customs.

These sanctions are imposed in stages, in accordance with the agreement between the parties and/or actors and the Customary Judicial Council. If the sanctions decided by the

⁹ Manfarisyah and Yulia, "The Participationof Women in the Village Adat Justice: the Regulations and Its Implementations in North Aceh Regency, "Indian Journal of Public Health Research & Development 9, no. 12 (2018): 180-185.

¹⁰ H. Kusmayanti and EL. Fakhriah, "The practice of dispute resolution in Aceh's Traditional Justice," *International Journal of Innovation, Creativity and Change* 10, no. 3 (2019): 154–168.

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Assembly are not carried out, the assembly meets to discuss the implementation of the sanctions that have been imposed. Each decision of the customary court assembly is accompanied by a process of peace and restoration.¹¹ This process is manifested in the form of mutual forgiveness (shaking hands) and/or *Pesijuk* events. The Customary Judicial Council is obliged to confirm that the settlement has been resolved, asking the parties and members of the community not to bring up any problems that have occurred. The peace process must be attended by the parties and village leaders.¹² Each Gampong Customary Court Decision or any other name in Aceh is made in writing, signed by the Chairperson and Members of the Assembly as well as both parties to the dispute, and copies of which are submitted to the Head of the Sector Police (Kapolsek), the Camat and the District Aceh Adat Council.

3.2 Legal Force of Customary Court Decisions

In the Joint Decrees of the Governor of Aceh, the Head of the Aceh Regional Police and the Aceh Traditional Council Number 189/667/20011, 1054/MAA/XII/2011, B/121/I/2012 concerning the Implementation of Gampong and Mukim Customary Courts or Other Names in Aceh (SKB), stated in the sixth dictum of the SKB as follows: 13 "Decision of the Gampong and Mukim Customary Courts or other names in Aceh is Final and Binding and cannot be submitted again to general courts or other courts." The binding nature of the Customary Court Decision is also reaffirmed in Article 18 paragraph (1) of Pergub Aceh 60/2013 which also states the following: "Decision of the Customary Court is peaceful and binding".

This means that the customary court decisions in Gampong in Aceh that fall under the authority of the Gampong are final and have legal force, so that other legal remedies cannot be taken. Basically, customary court decisions in Aceh can be categorized in two forms, namely:¹⁴ 1). For cases that fall into the category of disputes that do not tarnish the moral values of indigenous peoples, such as inheritance disputes, fights that cause minor injuries and slander, the nature of customary decisions is to seek common ground between the litigating parties. Customary sanctions for this type are usually fines, compensation, and diyat; 2). For customary cases that offend customary and moral norms, such as adultery, Zina, khalwat, the customary sanctions for this type are usually ostracism by the gampong community or another name and expulsion from the gampong community, and sometimes fines are added.

Decisions on customary cases that fall into the first category are usually made in consultation with the litigants, so that, according to the data we have obtained, they rarely cause problems in the future, both for the parties and the executors of customary justice in the gampong. However, if it falls into the second category, it is very likely that the parties will sue the customary justice executor, because the nature of the decision is to revoke the perpetrator's social status in the gampong community, either by expulsion or ostracism. Moreover, this second type of decision is sometimes accompanied by a fine paid to the

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¹¹ Andi Lesmana and Munawir, "The Effectiveness of the Existence of Village Customary Courts in Utilizing Problem Solving By the Bireuen Community." *Journal of Etika Demokrasi* 7, no. 4 (2022): 727-737. Doi: 10.26618/jed.v%vi%i.8998.

¹² K. Bustamam-Ahmad, "A study of Panglima La'Ōt: An 'Adat institution in Aceh, "*Al-Jami'ah* 55, no. 1 (2017): 155–188. Doi: 10.14421/ajis.2017.551.155-188.

¹³ TM. Mansur, "A Conceptual Framework of the Adat Court within the Formal Court: A Case of the Adat Aceh Court, in Indonesia, "SSRN Electronic Journal 2, no. 1 (2018): 1–10. Doi: 10.2139/ssrn.3113590.

¹⁴ Y. Abiyoso, "Adat Institutions In Aceh Government: A Constitutional Perspective Constitutional Perspective," *Journal of Islamic Law Studies* 4, no. 1 (2020): 1–15.

gampong.¹⁵ In a case, a Geuchik in a gampong in Lhokseumawe City where after he decided on a case that fell under the authority of the Gampong in Aceh, he was named a suspect with the offense of extortion, although investigators reconciled. He stated that in the gampong where he was Geuchik, it was a mutual agreement that for every immoral khalwat perpetrator in the gampong, the penalty was a fine as a customary punishment with amount of money handed over to the gampong. He did not expect that the implementation of these customary rules would cause legal problems.¹⁶

In interviews with police officers, it was explained that the party reporting the customary court decision would still be processed according to the alleged offense. Although investigators will still try to reconcile the two parties. If reconciliation does not occur, then the process will proceed to the stage of determining the suspect, detention if necessary and prosecution in court. Ultimately, the judge will decide whether the suspect is guilty or not. With regard to customary court decisions in gampong, the judge will use this as evidence and then form the basis for court decisions. Thus, on the one hand, customary court decisions have a legal basis for their application, but on the other hand, customary court decisions do not stop the parties' efforts to seek justice through other legal pocedure.

3.3 A Case Study in Muara Batu District

Muara Batu sub-district is the westernmost sub-district of North Aceh district. The number of gampongs in Muara Batu subdistrict is 24 gampongs. The total population in Muara Batu District in 2021 is 28,782 which are divided into 6,826 households. The employment sector of the majority of the population in the District is in the agricultural sector, while others work in the industrial, trade, transportation and other sectors. The population in Muara Batu Subdistrict, as is common in other villages in the North Aceh region, are Muslim. Based on the data the researchers obtained, every gampong in Muara Batu Subdistrict has a customary court, information about which can be seen at the geuchik's office or village hall which is posted on the wall in the form of a gampong customary court charter.



Figure 1. Information on Gampong Authorities at Balai Gampong Cot Seurani, Muara Batu.

¹⁵ TM. Mansur, et al., "The effectiveness of the implementation of customary fines in settlement of seclusion cases in Banda Aceh," *Sriwijaya Law Review* 4, no. 1 (2020): 52–61. Doi: 10.28946/slrev.Vol4.Iss2.221.pp52-61.

¹⁶ TM. Mansur, "Juridical Study of Indigenous Courts in Aceh" *Journal of Indonesian Adat Law (JIAL)* 2, no. 3 (2018b): 23–47. Doi: 10.46816/jial.v2i3.6.

¹⁷ Badan Statistik Indonesia, "Indonesia Statistics 2020," (Jakarta: BPS, 2020), p. 41.

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The customary rules that apply in Muara Batu District can be seen in the following table:

Table 1.
Customary Law and Implementation in Muara Batu District, North Aceh

	T	
No	Customary law	executor
1	Disputes: Disputes within the household, Disputes within the family related to faraids and joint property, Disputes between residents,	0 1 0
	Disputes: Insidious khalwat, Mild abuse, Harassment, incitement, slander, Theft in the Family, and defamation	
2	Indigenous violations regarding livestock, and agriculture	Cot Seurani, Keude Mane, Pante Gurah , Tanoh Anoe, Meunasah Lhok, Mane Tunoeng, Kuala Dua, Meunasah Baro

Source: North Aceh Regional Government Data, 2020

Legal sanctions for customary violations in the Gampong in the Muara Batu District are divided into 2 (two). First, for all customary violations that fall into the category of civil disputes, such as inheritance disputes, and family disputes seek peace and mutual forgiveness. Whereas for customary violations that are included in criminal disputes or can be included in minor crimes such as livestock theft, family theft, fights, slander, and immoral khalwat, the legal sanctions are *sayam* (peusijuk), diyat, fines, compensation, and expulsion or ostracized from the village community. However, in many cases, customary violations whose customary sanctions are fines, diyat, and expulsion from the gampong are not carried out because the gampong is very vulnerable to legal problems. As stated by Geuchik Mane Tunoeng that one of his residents committed adultery, there were no sanctions for them, even the perpetrators of adultery refused to marry. He explained that the gampong government of Mane Tunoeng would not implement any customary rules relating to crimes as long as there was no gampong qanun regarding this. On the other hand, customary regulations that are included in the civil dispute can be applied even though there is no Gampong qanun about it.

The same was explained by the Geuchik of Cot Seurani, Fajri, that any perpetrators of customary violations and have not been regulated in the gampong qanun, the gampong party only seeks peace between the parties. However, if the victim does not want to make peace, the village apparatus will hand over the case to the victim to carry out legal proceedings in accordance with criminal law rules. As for sexual harassment and adultery, in Gampong Cot Seurani, the case will be handed over directly to the police because according to him it is more appropriate to be punished by Qanun Jinayat. Apart from the reasons above, a number of gampong governments in Muara Batu District, doubt the gampong authority regarding customary disputes. Especially the issue of the status of customary rules, because as explained by Fikar, Geuchiek of Keude Mane Village, if they are called customary rules then those rules and sanctions should have been known by the community without the need for further clarification.

Fikar's explanation is acceptable, because the basic nature of adat is that it is carried out and internalized continuously by the community where the custom exists. For example, the division of inheritance with the matrilineal system or *Mamak* inheritance that applies in several areas in Minangkabau.¹⁸ The mamak inheritance rule has been in effect continuously, so that no Minangkabau people think it is strange or question it.¹⁹ Based on this explanation, actually the implementation of customary justice in gampongs in Aceh needs to be accompanied by the codification of these customary regulations into the form of gampong qanuns. The codification of customary rules into qanun gampong, on the one hand, is contrary to the basic principles of customary law, namely as an unwritten law that has been passed down from generation to generation in a society. As explained by Husni, a lecturer in customary law, customary rules that are legislated into law, lose their customary nature because all customary dispute resolution processes do not refer to customary rules, but to written legal rules.

In addition, in Qanun No. 9 of 2008 there is no article indicating the obligation of the gampong to legislate these customary regulations into a Qanun. However, codifying customary rules into village qanuns provides a number of advantages, including: 1). Provide legal certainty. Everyone will know which actions are included in the category of customary court authority, and what sanctions will be received when those regulations are violated; 2). It becomes the basis for imposing sanctions, because it could be rules that are considered customary as stated in Qanun No. 9 of 2008 is no longer known by the public. So actually when referring to the theory of customary rules, these rules can no longer be categorized as customary rules. With the codification of customary law into a gampong qanun, the gampong will be safer when dealing with the law if at one time there are parties who take legal action.

4. CONCLUSION

From the explanation above there are several rules that can be drawn, namely: Gampongs in Aceh have the authority to adjudicate cases of customary disputes at the customary courts in Gampong. Its legal basis is qanun Number 9 of 2008 concerning the development of customary life and customs. Decisions of customary courts are binding and final, and cannot be submitted again to general courts or other courts. If the customary court decision is related to disputes such as inheritance disputes, the decision can be used as written evidence in court if the parties continue the lawsuit in court. However, if the decision relates to a minor crime such as theft of livestock, immoral khalwat, then the decision can be used as evidence in a criminal or *jinayat* trial. Gampongs in the Muara Batu sub-district have customary courts in each gampong, but if they are related to minor crimes or jinayat, the gampong apparatus prefers to hand over the case to the authorities, if a peaceful process is not found. Except for cases of immoral khalwat and adultery committed in the gampong, the perpetrators are forced to marry or handed over to law enforcement to be processed according to jinayat law in Aceh.

¹⁸ M. Manarisp, "The Existence of Customary Crimes in National Law" *Lex Crimen* 01, no. 4 (2012): 24–40.

¹⁹ C. Batubara and Fatimah, "Struggling To Survive In Complex And Modern Era: Study on the Implemention of Alternative Dispute Resolution in Aceh Customary Courts," *Proceeding of The 16 th Annual International Conference on Islamic Studies The Contribution of Indonesian Islam To The World Civilization The Dynamics of Islamic Institutions*, (2016), p. 45.

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