

THE RITUAL OF *KHANDURI LAÔT* IN LOWLAND ACEH: An Ethnographic Study in South, South West and West Aceh

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Abstract: This article aims to describe and analyze critically about the ritual of *khanduri laôt* in lowland Aceh. This annual ritual has been performed from one generation to another for it cannot be separated from the life of fishermen and it leaves a deep impression among the participants. This research is a field research and its data is obtained through meticulous observation of the ritual action and in-deep interview, discussion with the main protagonists of the ritual performance. The result of the research shows that the village fishermen made the offering (cosmological exchange) besides reciting the verses from the Qur'an. The offering is made to "the possessor of the fish" and is also given to "the sea water spirit" who takes care of the fish pond, the coast sea, the sea's surface, the waves, and the deep sea. The village fishermen considered that cosmological exchange is important to be done as the protection for the fishermen from harm at sea besides the fish will go near the sea coast and taste the *khanduri* so that the fishermen can easily catch them.

Abstrak: Ritual Kenduri Laut di Daratan Aceh: Kajian Etnografi di Aceh Selatan, Barat dan Baratdaya. Artikel ini bertujuan untuk mendeskripsikan dan menganalisa secara kritis tentang ritus *khanduri laôt* di dataran rendah Aceh. Ritus tahunan ini telah dilaksanakan dari generasi ke generasi karena tidak dapat dipisahkan dari kehidupan nelayan dan meninggalkan impresi yang mendalam diantara pengikutnya. Penelitian ini adalah penelitian lapangan dan datanya diperoleh melalui pengamatan terhadap aktivitas dan upacara ritus, wawancara mendalam dan diskusi dengan informan kunci. Hasil penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa nelayan desa membuat sesajian (pertukaran *cosmos*) selain membaca ayat-ayat al-Qur'an. Sesajian juga dibuat untuk *the possessor of the fish*, dan juga kepada *the sea water spirit* yang menjaga kolam ikan, pantai laut, permukaan laut, gelombang dan laut dalam. Nelayan-nelayan desa menganggap bahwa pertukaran kosmos perlu dilakukan sebagai proteksi bagi mereka dari gangguan di laut dan ikan akan pergi mendekati ke tepian dan memakan sesajian, sehingga nelayan bisa menangkapnya dengan mudah.

Keywords: ritual of the *khanduri laôt*, sea water spirit, cosmological exchange

Introduction

Administratively, Aceh province consists of 23 regencies which five of them do not have sea domain. According to central bureau of statistics of Aceh, in 2014, 74.719 people of Acehnese population are fishermen.¹ For a coastal community, being a fisherman is a hereditary profession to meet the needs of living. Ecologically Aceh environment comprises of three domains, forest (Jamee *hutèn*; Acehnese *uteun*), agricultural areas (Jamee *sawah*; Acehnese *blang*), and sea (Jamee *lauik*; Acehnese *laôt*). Each ecological bond has its own tradition. The smallest unit in a sea community is called *lhok* (a bay) led by a leader in a fishermen community (Acehnese *panglima laôt lhok*).² *lhok* acts as a right-hand man of the government in providing assistance on fishery development in maintaining and preserving tradition, norms and customs within of the fishermen communities.³ In addition, he is also a leader of the fish trawls (Jamee *pukèk lauk*; Acehnese *pukat unghôt*) chosen by trawl skippers (Jamee *pawang pukèk*; Acehnese *pawang pukat*) with the agreement of the head of the district (Acehnese/Indonesian *camat*).⁴ He also acts as a liaison between fishermen and the government, between *panglima laôt* and other *panglima laôt* from other areas in order to improve the livelihood of coastal communities. In other word, *panglima laot* is a leader who guides the local fishermen in Aceh. He has broad authority including determining the type of equipment used in fishing, allowing the non-local fishermen to fish in his territory, resolving the disputes and conflicts among fishermen, locating the place of boat mooring, caring for taboos in fishing activities, and imposing the penalty against violators.⁵ *Panglima laot*, moreover, has existed since the sultanate of Iskandar Muda era (1607 -1636).⁶

Each *lhok* comprises of one or more villages (Jamee *kampung*; Acehnese *gampông*), several settlements, or even a sub-district. To maintain the coordination and cooperation in between *lhok*, a coordination body is formed in every level under the name of the district

¹Badan Pusat Statistik Provinsi Aceh, "Jumlah Petani/Nelayan dan Produksi Perikanan Laut Menurut Kabupaten/Kota, 2014" (Banda Aceh: t.p., 2016).

²In the past, *Panglima Laôt* was occupied by hereditary, but today he is chosen by the head of fish trawls in certain area. Miftachuddin Cut Adek, "Kearifan Lokal dalam Komunitas Nelayan Aceh," in <http://maa.acehprov.go.id/?p=426> retrieved on 23 June, 2016.

³The bulletin of *Panglima Laôt Aceh Strategic Planning 2005-2015*, p. 3.

⁴The procedures of the election of *panglima laot* are 1. The number of candidates are at least five people who are religious, a leader of fish trawl, literate and live in *lhok*; 2. The candidates are elected by all the head of fish trawls of the area; 3. The final decision is consider legal if at least attended by two third of the head of fish trawls of the area; 4. The candidate who get the most votes will automatically being a *panglima laot*; 5. If the number of votes are draw, the discussion will be taken for the final decision. See the result of *Panglima Laot Meeting in the Special Province of Aceh* (Langsa, East Aceh: 23- 25 January 1992).

⁵S. Daud, & C.A. Miftachuddin, *Adat Melaot (Adat Menangkap Ikan Dilaut)* (Banda Aceh: Boebon Jaya, 2010).

⁶Nurasa, T., et al. *The Role of Panglima Laot "Sea Commander" System in Coastal Fisheries Management in Aceh, Indonesia* (Jakarta: Research Institute for Marine Fisheries Jakarta, Indonesia, 1994).

panglima laôt (Indonesian *panglima laôt kabupaten*) and the province *panglima laôt* (Indonesian *panglima laôt propinsi*).⁷ The *panglima laôt* holds the position as an *adat* leader for the coastal domain. Moreover, he also acts as liaison between government and fishermen communities in encouraging the development of programs.⁸ One of the roles is to hold a *khanduri* at the coastal sea. This ritual is called *khanduri laôt* or *khanduri tron u laôt* “descend to the sea” which is performed annually.⁹

This annual ritual is performed one generation to another for it cannot be separated from the life of fishermen and it leaves a deep impression among the participants. It has become an *adat* that has left a deep impression for them. Pawang Ganta says “If the *khanduri laôt* ritual is not performed, as if it is something wrong with the fishermen or they feel something that there is not perfect in their life”. The aim of this ritual is to ask Allâh to supply plenty of fish and protect the fishermen from harm at sea. This can be interpreted from the content of the prayer (Acehnese/Indonesian *do’a*) recited during the *khanduri laôt* at the seashore. The *imâm* says “Holding the *khanduri laôt* is a one of the ways to thank Allâh. If we are good at thanking Him, He would always add to our livelihood”. The ritual of *khanduri laôt* has a hidden relation and has determined the ease of getting livelihood and safety that can be gained from the sea as the fishermen believe that if this ritual is not performed, misfortunes (Indonesian *malapetaka*) would come and shorten lives and cut off their livelihood. Below is the description and analysis of the ritual of *khanduri laôt* as recorded in Blangporoh village of South Aceh, Lhok Pawoh village of South West Aceh and Teunom of Aceh Jaya (before West Aceh).

The *Khanduri Laôt* in Blangporoh in South Aceh

The *panglima laôt* together with his staff, trawl skippers, and boat skippers hold a meeting called *rapat laôt* or “meeting for the sea” to decide when a *khanduri laôt* would be held and how much money should be spent and collected from each trawler, boat, canoe, etc. The committee members are formed to collect money for buying rams and other needed

⁷Based on its social structure, *panglima laôt lhok* plays an actual and constituent role to uphold traditional regulation (Jamee *adat lauik*; Acehnese *adat laôt*) in combination with *syariah* law. This proves that this institution is taken a bottom up approach instead of top-down (*The bulletin of Panglima Laôt Aceh Strategic Planning 2005-2015*), p. 3.

⁸Based on the results of *panglima laôt* meeting in 1992, the general functions and duties of *panglima laôt* are preserving and observing the traditional law and custom of the sea, coordinating every fishing in the sea, solving the dispute among members, organizing and holding the *khanduri laôt*, protecting the trees at the seashore from illegal logging, and being a liaison between fishermen and government and other *panglima laôt*. See *The Result of Panglima Laôt Meeting in the Special Province of Aceh*. Langsa, East Aceh 23- 25 January 1992 .

⁹The *khanduri laot* is performed at least once in three years at the beginning of western or eastern season. *The Result of Panglima Laôt Meeting in the Special Province of Aceh*. Langsa, East Aceh 23- 25 January 1992.

materials.¹⁰ They invited *imâm*, *teungku*, orphans, poor, and the village staff to attend the *khanduri laôt* ritual on that day. The preparation, the beginning, and the end of the ritual are performed on the seashore as guided by the *panglima laôt* in the *rapat laôt*. They are certainly skillful in managing the ritual, knowing about taboos and the materials needed in the ritual. The people taking part in the *khanduri laôt* are Adli, the representative from department of fisheries from South Aceh, Hafidh, the leader of district, Dwi Haryanto, the leader of police district, Samsul Bahri, the leader of army district, Anasruddin, the village leader, Syarkani, the village secretary, Tgk. Hasbi, *imâm* of the village mosque, politicians, orphans, poor, *pawang laôt* and some other people.

The *khanduri laôt* is performed on September 6th, 2015 in Blangporoh. It is performed by boat skippers (Acehnese *pawang-pawang-bot*)¹¹ or trawl skippers (Acehnese *pawang pukat*) who are directly led by the *panglima laôt* Ikram as he knows many things that are related to the ritual: the condition of the ritual, management and taboos that have to be avoided in the ritual. All *pawang* are never replaced by other people except when they are sick. They are active and responsible for the performed ritual, but are also helped by other fishermen and their wives to refine cooking spices, to cook, and to wash dishes, and glasses. They are paid and directly supervised by the *panglima laôt*.

This ritual is performed when the western wind starts blowing when *keunong*¹² *tujôh blah* (“hitting seventeen”) from April”. *Keunong tujôh blah* is the season changes from the east season (Acehnese *musém timu*) to the west season (Acehnese *musém barat*). When the western wind starts blowing, the fishermen cannot go out at sea due to high waves. The *khanduri laôt* ritual, therefore, is performed. This ritual is usually performed on Monday or Thursday in Aceh. In Blangporoh, the ritual is performed on Thursday. The villagers believed that the good deeds of human beings are sent up by angels to sky on every Monday and Thursday.¹³

The fishermen slaughter two rams. They do not slaughter a buffalo because the time of the *khanduri laôt* is close to a *meugang* day (two days preceding the coming of Ramadhan¹⁴)

¹⁰In some areas, the slaughtered animal must be a *bule* buffalo (Indonesian: *kerbau bule*, Acehnese: *keube jagat*) such as in Teunom district, Aceh Jaya.

¹¹Skippers for 12-17 meters of traditional wooden boat called *pawang pukat*.

¹²*Keunong* or “heating” is the Acehnese seasonal calendar (for the Acehnese seasonal calendar, see A. Manan, “Keuneunong,” in *Adabya*, No. 29, Vol. 15, 2013.

¹³Many old men and old women in the village on those days are observing fasts which they called *puasa senin kamis* (Thursday and Monday fasts). One woman says that observing the Thursday and Monday fast is good for her health. Besides getting religious merit (Acehnese/Indonesia *pahala*) from Allâh, most importantly, she wants her good deeds to be sent up by the angel to sky while she is fasting.

¹⁴For further discussion about the *meugang* day. See A. Manan, “Ritual Memburu Batu Giok pada Masyarakat di Kawasan Pergunungan Singgahmata: Penelitian Etnografi di Kecamatan Beutong Ateuh, Nagan Raya” (A paper presented at International Conference on Education, Islamic Studies and Social Sciences Research (ICEISR) on June 23-25, 2016, Universitas Syiahkuala Banda Aceh,

and the fishermen have to save money for buying meat on that day. The bones, the contents of the stomach and the head of the rams are not wrapped with their skin to become an offering for the spirits of the sea. When the writer asked the *panglima laôt* why the offering is not thrown to the sea? He answers that a ram is not suitable to be an offering because the fishermen consider being “hot”. He adds “If it was done, it will be made the fishermen sick”.¹⁵

At night, the villages *imâm* of Blangporoh, Blangbaru, Kutaiboh, Ujongpadang, Pulo Ie recite the verses from the *Qur’ân* namely, the *sûrah Yâsîn*, the *sûrah al-Fâtiḥah*, the *sûrah al-Ikhlâs* and other short verses in the *Qur’ân*. The *imâm* also recites *shamadiyah* and *do’a* till 4.30 in the early morning of the following day.

In the past a buffalo was slaughtered for the *khanduri laôt*. The head, the contents of the stomach and the bone of the buffalo were directly wrapped within its hide, tied with a nylon rope and placed on a fishing boat to become an offering for *penjaga laôt* “the sea keeper”. For this present occasion the fishermen pushed the boat together to the sea and six people got into the boat in order to throw the offering. They are: 1. Said Abubakar, a boat rower as well as a *pawang laôt*, 2. Fauzi, a boat rower as well as a *pawang laôt*, 3. Ahmad, a boat rower, 4. Abdullah, a boat rower, 5. Burhan, a *pawang laôt* as well as healer “*dukun*”, and 6. M. Hukom, a helmsman. All fishermen, skippers (Jamee *pawang pukèk*; Acehese *pawang pukat*) together with the *imâm* recite *do’a* and pray for the Prophet Muhammad’s well-being. Then the fishing boat is sailed out about a mile away from the coast, where prayers (Arabic *du’â*) are recited and the offering is thrown overboard. It is thrown around *gabu* coral reefs (Acehese *kareueng gabu*) between Manggèng district and Labuhan Haji district because there are so many *gabu* fish there. The fishermen believe that these coral reefs have spirits (Acehese *na keuneumit*) taking care of them called *ureueng alôh* (“a very tiny person which referred to as the sea water spirit or genie that cannot be seen with the naked eyes”). Having arrived over these coral reefs, the machine of the boat is turned off. The nylon tied the offering is untied. It is then thrown to the sea water around *gabu* coral reefs after reciting *shamadiyah* and the *do’a*. This is the core of the *khanduri laôt* ritual. After a signal from one of the ritual leaders from the boat, the invited guests, orphans, and poor standing on the beach begin eating the *khanduri*.

The offering is made to the Prophet Khaidir, the “the fish keeper” (Acehese *penjaga unγκôt*). It has been told that he is called as “the owner of the fish”. He “is still alive” and charged with the task “to take care of the oceans”. The Prophet Ilyas, who “is also still alive”, “takes care of the mountains”. Pawang M. Yatim has another opinion; he says that the

2016), p. 240-251; A. Manan, “The Ritual Calendar of South Aceh, Indonesia” (Ph.D. Dissertation, Muenster, WWU Muenster, 2015).

¹⁵Unfortunately, I do not get information why the fishermen will be inflicted with diseases if some parts of the slaughtered ram are thrown to the sea as an offering on the day of the *khanduri laôt*.

aim of throwing the offering to the sea is that the fish can taste the *khanduri* held by the fishermen on the seashore. Tgk. Sa'dan says that the aim of throwing the offering to the sea is that the fish will go near the sea coast and the fishermen could easily catch them with their dragnet (Acehnese *pukat Aceh*), fishing nets, etc. Meanwhile *pawang* Nyakda in Suak Tangan-Tangan says that the aim of throwing the offering to the sea is to honor the “see keepers” (Acehnese *penjaga laôt*) referred as the sea water spirits that will be honor to the fishermen that will be gone on fishing.

The *Khanduri Laôt* in Lhok Pawoh in South West Aceh

The fishermen in Lhok Pawoh hold a ritual of *khanduri laôt* on August 28th, 2015 in which the fishermen hold a social gathering (Acehnese *meripè*) and is asked for a donation to buy a buffalo, cooking spices, coffee, tea and other needed materials for the ritual, including for giving alms (Acehnese *seudeukah*) to the reciters of *Qur'ân* and the orphans. The money is from the following donators:

Num	Donators	Sum of money (Rp)
01	Indonesian legislative assembly	500.000
02	Head of the district “Camat”	200.000
03	Each village head	150.000
04	Each <i>baganapông</i> ¹⁶	100.00
05	Each fishing netter	100.00
06	Each traditional trawl owner	50.000
07	Each store	10.000
08	Each fish monger	10.000
09	Each <i>pedicab</i>	5.000

Sixty orphans are invited to eat the *khanduri* and Rp. 10.000 is given for each. The invitation is also given to the head of the region (*bupati*), Indonesian legislative assembly of south Aceh, the head of the district (*camat*), the head of the village, the leader of police district, the leader of army district, the representative of fishery department, all *panglima laôt* in the district, all fishermen, and all school teachers to eat at the seashore on that day. The person who welcomed the guests is Jakfar, the head of the institution for the defence of the village.

The water buffalo slaughtered on the *khanduri laôt* is not made to partake in procession.¹⁷

¹⁶A *bagan apông* is fishing platform. It is formed of two wooden boats with distance between 1-1.5 meters. The gap in between is used to spread the net underneath the water.

¹⁷In 1986 in Ujong Pusong and Ujong Blang village, north Aceh, before a buffalo was slaughtered for the *khanduri laôt*, it was displayed in procession three days prior to being killed. It was pulled from the seashore of Ujong Pusong to the sea shore of Ujong Blang. For the first night the water

It is only bathed and cooled by the previous *paglima laôt*, Tgk. Majid who then kills it at the seashore.¹⁸ After the water buffalo has been skinned, the meat is not allowed to be taken home and cannot be eaten before the committee members give a sign to eat. It is cooked at the seashore. Meanwhile the bones, the stomach, as well as seven packets of white rice are wrapped within its hide which is neatly sewn up with nylon ropes as the offering to the “sea keepers” (Acehnese *penjaga laôt*). After wrapping an offering, the *panglima laôt*, Azman with the help of the committee members place the offering in the boat of Sukarman, a fisherman.

Before pushing the boat with the offering to the sea, all fishermen together with *pawang laôt* and *teungku* recite *do’a* and pray for the well-being (Acehnese *seulawet*) of the Prophet Muhammad. Four people Tgk Sulaiman, Wen Tando, Marumi and Sukarman get into the boat. The fishing boat then sails out about one mile far away. There, Marumi throws an anchor (Acehnese *saôh*) of the boat then stop. The *do’a* is recited by Tgk. Sulaiman as the offering is thrown as follows:

<i>Allâhumma ingkâna rizkhi fissamâ i O Allâh,</i>	if our livelihood is still in the sky,
<i>fa anzilna</i>	Please send them down to us!
<i>Wa ingkâna fil ardhî fa akhrijna</i>	If it is on the earth, please show them to us!
<i>Fa ingkâna muâssiran fayassirna</i>	If it is difficult to get it, make us easy to get it!
<i>Wa ingkâna harâman fathahirna</i>	If it is unlawful, please clean it for us
<i>Wa ingkâna ba‘idan bakharribna</i>	And if is far away, please make it close to us
<i>Ya razzâk, ya razzâk,</i>	O the livelihood giver, o the livelihood provider
<i>ya khairurraziqîn</i>	O the best livelihood provider.

Wen Tando, Marumi and Sukarman hold up their hands and say *amîn-amîn*, means “please accept O Allâh” at the end of every recited *do’a*. After reciting this *do’a*, Tgk. Sulaiman

buffalo slept in Ujong Blang. On the second day, it was pulled from the seashore of Ujong Blang to the seashore of Ujong Pusong and it slept at the seashore of Ujong Pusong for the second night. On the third day, it was pulled from seashore of Ujong Pusong to the seashore of Ujong Blang and slept at the seashore of Ujong Blang for the third night. Early morning on the fourth day, it was killed at the seashore of the Ujong Blang. During the procession at the seashore, its head was decorated with a white and black cloth. One was used to fan at its back by a healer “*dukun*” but the meaning was mentioned. Before being killed, it was cooled by a *panglima laôt* then it was given to the *imâm* to be killed. People took meat from its thigh and its hip only while other parts such as the head, the stomach’s contents and the bones were directly wrapped in a sack to become an offering that would be thrown into the sea water. See Razali Umar, *et al. Upacara Traditional dalam Kaitannya dengan Peristiwa Alam dan Kepercayaan Propinsi Daerah Istimewa Aceh* (Banda Aceh: Pusat Penelitian Sejarah dan Kebudayaan Daerah, 1986-1987), p. 46-47.

¹⁸Haikal, *Panglima Laôt*, states that after the buffalo slaughtered, it will then paraded along the coast that have been determined. The hatching blood of its neck is believed to be the food for the sea keeper (water spirit/genie) which is *Nek Jaheung*, *Nek Jeumblang* and *Nek Jeuboh*. Thereafter, the meat is taken for cooking, while the bones and stomach will be wrapped within its hide and sewn up neatly with rattan rope as the offering. Haikal, “Panglima Laôt,” in <https://haikalbireuen2015.wordpress.com/>, no date of access.

then slowly throws the offering into the seawater. The ritual of throwing the offering slowly into the seawater is deemed as the peak of the *khanduri laôt* ritual. Wen Tando then gives a signal¹⁹ from the boat to the invited guests, orphans, and poor standing on the seashore to begin eating the *khanduri*. From the signal given by Wen Tando on the fishing boat till the guest finish eating at the seashore is deemed as the last step of the *khanduri laôt* ritual.

Like in the *khanduri laôt* in Blangporoh in the past, the offering is made to the Prophet Khaidir, “the possessor of the fish”.²⁰ He “is still alive” and is charged with the task “to take care of the oceans”. The Prophet Ilyas, who “is also still alive”, “takes care of the mountains”. But the offering is also given to *Sedang Tetap* who takes care of the coast, to *Sedang Mukmin* who takes care of the sea’s surface, to *Sedang Shalèh* who takes care of the waves, to *Sedang Shalihin* who takes care of the deep sea and to *Putro Nurkaton*, the water spirit who takes care of the fish ponds in the sea. These seawater spirits are “the subordinates of the Prophet Khaidir”, says Tgk. Sulaiman.²¹ Below is a story of the fish origin I record from Pawang M. Yunus in Suak Tangan-Tangan, south west Aceh.

One day, the Prophet Adam and Eve (Acehnese/Indonesian *hawa*) were invited by a poor woman to her house but she said to them that she did not have side dishes to be cooked. When this poor woman reported to Eve, she then directly cut the flesh of her right calf without Adam’s knowledge. Eve gave the meat to the poor woman and said to her “this what we had” (Acehnese *nyo yang na bak kamo*), the poor woman brought this gift back to her house to be cooked as the side dishes. Eve after that fell down because her calf was bloody. Adam was then so surprised when he found what happened to Eve. Eve could not get up at that time. Adam then covered himself (Acehnese *mekeulubong*) with clothes and prayed to Allâh so that Eve could be well again. In the afternoon of that day, both Adam and Eve went to the poor woman’s house. When they arrived at the poor woman’s house, the food was given to them along with the cooked meat of Eve’s calf. They only ate rice but not the cooked side dishes because they already knew about it.

¹⁹The red flag is usually flown to the offering boat before it is changed with the white one right after the releasing offering done completely as a sign to people at the seashore to begin eating the *khanduri*. See Daud & Miftachuddin, *Adat Melaôt*.

²⁰It is somehow different in the process of releasing the offering in East Aceh. The boat used to deliver the offering must be decorated beautifully. Then, the offering is put into the boat together with the residue of meal eaten at the seashore. After all conditions are fulfilled, the boat starts moving to the middle of the sea followed by other boats for releasing the offering. *The Result of Panglima Laôt Meeting in the Special Province of Aceh* (Langsa, East Aceh, 23- 25 January 1992).

²¹It is the same how the ritual of *khanduri laôt* performed by the fishermen in Seunuddon, Lhoksukon, North Aceh. The committee sacrificed a buffalo for feeding 40 orphans and other invited guests including government officials of that area. All meat is taken and cooked for serving guests at the midday; meanwhile the head and the bones of the buffalo are thrown to the sea after being wrapped with its hide as an offering. At the time this offering is brought to the sea, the sky is shot at 20 times. The skeleton of the slaughtered buffalo is tied with three slabs of stone in order to sink, but there is no explanation to which the offering is made. (see *Serambi Indonesia*, July 2nd, 2009).

After they went back, the poor woman then put the cooked side dishes in the coconut shell (Acehnese *lam bruk u*) in the back of her house. After three days, the woman went to see the side dishes in the coconut shell. Surprisingly; there were some living things in the coconut shell. Day by day the living things became more and more until some of them jumped out of the coconut shell. At that time the woman was so surprised that the poor woman called Adam and showed the living things to him in the coconut shell. Adam said to the poor woman “it was better these living things had not been placed at the back of the house, please make a pond that has water”. Then the poor woman dug a small pond with her feet and moved the living things there.²² After a day the pond was filled with living things. The living things multiplied. The poor woman reported to Adam again that the pond was full of living things. Adam after that said again to the poor woman to dig a bigger pond. After several days the big pond was again full of the living things. The living things multiplied. The poor woman reported again to Adam that the pond again was full with living things. Adam then asked the poor woman to plant thorn rattans and sugar palm²³ plants around the big pond in order that these living things could not jump out of the pond. After several days Adam and Eve went to the pond, they were so glad that there were various colors of living things in the pond. Eve wanted to catch one of the living things but she could not due to their wildness. Eve was disappointed. Eve remembered the poor woman who had invited her and her husband, Adam to her house. Her name was Putro Nurkaton. Eve then called Putro Nurkaton. “Please come here! Please come here!” Then all the living things in the pond came close to her. Adam then made an estuary of the pond to the sea all the living things went to the sea becoming the various kinds of colorful fish”.

Asyék adds that *Putro Nurkaton*, a water spirit having the authority ordered the fish in the sea on where to go. He also says “the offering is made for the safety of the fishermen fishing”. Fishermen can observe that if the offering is accepted by *penjaga laôt* “the see keeper” the offering will sink and is not thrown back by the sea waves to the seashore. Tgk. Sulaiman says that in 1990 the offering was refused by *penjaga laôt* “the sea keeper”. Abu Usman,

²²M. Yunus says that it is truly prohibited to kick a trawl (Acehnese/Indonesian *pukat*) as a means of seeking the fish in the sea because *Putro Nurkaton* dug a fish pond with her feet. He says that if a trawl or a canoe (Acehnese *peuraho*) is kicked, it will be unlucky (Acehnese/Indonesian *malang*), meaning that the fishermen will not get many fish or even no fish at all. Other *pawang* for instance; Pawang Nyakda also gives the same opinion.

²³The local fishermen consider that *Putro Nurkaton* a water spirit as well as the one who took care of the fish ponds in the sea, planted rattan and sugar palm around her pond in order to stop the fish jumping out from the pond. Pawang Nyakda says that the rattans and the ropes from the sugar palm fiber used for a dragnet in order that the fish which has been in the dragnet would not go out. In the water, the rattans and the ropes made of the fiber of sugar palm reflect light that made the fish afraid to go out from the dragnet which was being pulled from the sea to the seashore till they all are caught. Nowadays, the use of rattans and the ropes from the sugar palm fiber for dragnets is the repetition of what *Potro Nurkaton* did. In addition, the “soul” (*roh*) of fish is called Nurkaton, the “soul” of stone is Nurpati, the “soul” of tree is Nurbati, and the “soul” of iron is Kusani (inner) and Sangkani (outer).

the leader of group threw it to the sea but the offering was thrown back by the sea waves. On returning, he felt ill. After this rejection, the committee members of the *khanduri laôt* decided that the offering would no longer be thrown by Abu Usman. The fishermen community thought that he was not knowledgeable in throwing it to the seawater.

Mistakes done when performing the *khanduri laôt* could cause calamities to human beings, especially fishermen who are always searching for fish in the sea. Tgk. Sa'dan says that should the *khanduri laôt* not be performed, there would be no more "blessing" (Acehnese *beureukat*) of the livelihood. By "blessing" of the livelihood he means that although the fishermen try so hard to get fish but the result is unsatisfactory. Other fishermen, however, contended that there are not many fish today due to tsunami disaster. When the tsunami occurred on December 26th, 2004, all the small fish died.

After eating, Azman, the *panglima laôt* stands up in front of the invited guests to announce to everyone who attends the ritual of the *khanduri laôt* especially the fishermen that they are not allowed to carry out their activities in the sea on the following taboo days (Acehnese *huroe pantang*): (1) Three days after the *khanduri laôt* is held, from the sunrise on the first day to the sunset on the third day. (2) On Friday, from Thursday's sunset to Friday's sunset. (3) The reason of this taboo day due to Friday is a holy day for Muslim where all men must fulfill the obligation of Friday prayer at noon. If they are at sea, it is impossible for them to do it in a timely manner. Friday is also used by fishermen to mend nets, trawls, boats or other fishing equipment, so that the condition of their fishing equipment is in the good shape. Last, it means to let the sea free of fishermen in order to allow the fish, shrimp, and others spawning.²⁴ (4) On *Īd al-Fitr* (the festival of the fast breaking). It is prohibited for two days, from the sunset on the *meugang* day to the second day of the festival of the fast breaking. (5) On *Īd al-Adhâ* (the festival of the sacrifice). It is prohibited for two days, from the sunset on the festival of the sacrifice day to the second day of it. (6) On the Independence Day of August 17th. It is prohibited to work in the sea for one day from the sunrise to the sunset. (7) On December 26th, this is the new taboo day agreed on the meeting of Aceh's *Panglima Laôt* Council in Banda Aceh December 9th, 2005, to commemorate the earthquake and tsunami disaster on December 26th, 2004. The prohibition applies from the sunrise to the sunset. (8) On the day where the death happen in one of the fishermen villages until the funeral ceremony ends. (9) On particular days which are instructed by the police at any time. (10) On the day where one of fishermen missing at the sea until the dead body is found, or after searching for seven days. (11) Language used. There are some sayings that are prohibited to use in the sea. It is unwritten rules, but all fishermen know. For example the word *gunong* (mountain) because the wave as high as mountain will hit them, and the word *lheuh* (released) since it causes the fish which has been caught could be released again. Therefore, the words *tanoh manyang* and *leukang* are used instead of *gunong* and

²⁴Miftachhuddin Cut Adek, "Kearifan Lokal dalam Komunitas Nelayan Aceh," in <http://maa.acehprov.go.id/?p=426>, access on 23 June, 2016.

lheuh.²⁵ (12) Taboo question. Most fishermen believe on good and bad luck. If they are going to fish at sea, it is forbidden to ask “where are you going?” since the question will bring misfortunes. If they were asked such question, they would likely cancel the plan for fishing.

These taboo days indicates a combination idea. Number 1 is based on *adat*, number 2-4 is based on Islam and number 5 is based on the state, and number 6 refers to the day of the dead. Those who violate these prohibitions will be sanctioned as follows (1) Seizure of all his catching; 25 % is given to *baitul mal* (treasury), 25 % is given to the welfare of the fishermen, 25 % is given to the body of conference of *panglima laôt*, and 25 % is given to *panglima laôt* and his staff. (2) Prohibition from working, minimum three days and maximum seven days.²⁶

As a “father of fishermen”, the *panglima laôt* has the authority to judge the fishermen if fish are caught on the day of the above taboo days. The day of the prohibition is very good to allow fish to restock (providing opportunity for fish to grow). It is a means of taking care and honouring the sea for the next generation. Bang Dar, a fishmonger says, “If sea is not managed well, the Acehnese fishermen and other people such as the fishmonger (Acehnese *mugè*), *toké bangku* must be ready to change their profession.²⁷ Wen Tando says that if these taboos are not obeyed, it is doubtful that the “sea keepers” (Acehnese *perjaga laôt*) will accept the offering. As a consequence, disasters will happen, causing lack of livelihood for them. In addition, the taboos must be respected. The fishermen assumed that if these taboos were violated, something bad would happen despite the cast of time. The safety of the fishermen would be at risk. Should the offering not be accepted by the “sea keepers”, it could usually be known through the dreaming of *pawang laôt* or through the dreaming of one of the oldest men in the village.

At night, the Qur’anic verses are recited from sunset to sunrise. Twelve good reciters are invited and Rp120.000 is given for each as charity (Acehnese *seudeukah*). The reciting is led by Teungku Muda from Padang Kawa, Tangan-Tangan. When the sun rises, Teungku Muda performs a special call to prayer (Acehnese/Indonesian *azan*) at the seashore as follows:

<i>Allâhu akbar</i> 2x	Allâh is the greatest, Allâh is the greatest 2x
<i>Asyhadu allâ ilâha illa Allâh</i> 2x	I witness that There is no God but Allâh 2x
<i>Asyhadu anna Muḥammadar rasulullâh</i> 2x	I witness that Muḥammad is His Apostle 2x

²⁵Daud & Miftachuddin, *Adat Melaot*.

²⁶The same sanctions are applied if the fishermen transgress the taboos days in Meunasah Keudèe village, Mesjid Raya district-Aceh Besar. See A.B. Wibowo, *et al.*, *Sistem Pengetahuan Kenelayanan pada Masyarakat Nelayan Aceh Besar* (Banda Aceh: Balai Kajian Sejarah dan Nilai Tradisional Banda Aceh: 2000), p. 77.

²⁷See *Serambi Indonesia* on July 2nd, 2009. See M. Adli Abdullah, *et al.*, *Selama Kearifan Adalah Kekayaan, Eksistensi Panglima Laôt dan Hukum Adat Laôt di Aceh* (Banda Aceh: Balai Kajian Sejarah dan Nilai Tradisional Banda Aceh, 2006), pp. 65-66 for days the fishermen are not allowed to catch fish in the sea.

Hai ya 'alash shalâh 2x

Hai ya 'alal palâh 2x

Allâhu akbar 2x

Lâ ilâha illa Allâh 1x

Come to the prayer! 2x

Come to the betterment 2x

Allâh is the greatest 2x

There is no God but Allâh 1x

After performing the call to prayer, they perform the “sunrise prayer” (Acehnese *semayang subòh*) and recite *do'a*. In these prayers one asks Allâh to supply plenty of fish in the time to come in order to have a better life in the future. The ritual of the *kenduri laôt* then ended and the committee members placed all things in the correct order. The local modernists, who discussed, however, are not in agreement with the current practice of *khanduri laôt* especially giving offerings to the seawater spirits. Tgk. Kamaruddin says that such practice of *khanduri laôt* is clearly idolatrous (Acehnese *musyéék*). The *khanduri laôt* is tantamount to polytheism or making Allâh plural (Acehnese *pedua Tuhan*). The interviewer further say that basically, holding *khanduri* is not prohibited because it is a charity but the practice of offering to the water spirits cannot be accepted. The world with all its contents is owned by Allâh. The practice of *khanduri laôt* is truly an old custom that the fishermen currently continue to perform. However, according to Daud and Miftachuddin the practice of *khanduri laot* is not an idolatrous practice. The wrapped buffalo bones will be crowded by fish to be devoured and it will be the home for fish. For seven days after the last feast, no one allowed to catch fish around the offering drowned due to the location will be the place for fish to lay and hatch their eggs. It is also the reason why the offering is drowned near to the waterfront to make the fishermen able to fish at the closest sea part.²⁸

The *Khanduri Laôt* in Teunom, Aceh Jaya

In contrast to Blang Poroh and Lhok Pawoh in southern Aceh regency, the *khanduri laôt* in Teunom, Aceh Jaya is held twice a year. The first *khanduri* is called *khanduri ubiet* (small *khanduri*) performed at the beginning of the east season, while the *khanduri rayeuk* (big *khanduri*) is conducted in the middle of the east season. *Khanduri ubiet* is performed as a welcome to the sea since the fishermen are going to go out to the sea for the first time after a long break throughout the west season. It is also a sign that there will be a *khanduri rayeuk* in the near future. This *khanduri* is attended by a small number of people compared to the *khanduri rayeuk*. Since this is a small *khanduri*, no money is collected from fishermen because the food and dishes for eating together at the seashore are brought from home. The *khanduri* is accomplished by reciting *do'a* together at the seashore led by a *tengku*. The contents of *do'a* recited by the *tengku* are as follows:

He praised Allâh and prayed for the Prophet and his family's well-being.

He asked for a good place in this world and the hereafter, beseeching that all disaster be avoided, and requesting Allâh's perpetual blessing.

²⁸Daud & Miftachuddin, *Adat Melaôt*.

He sought Allâh's forgiveness for their teachers, parents, grandparents, neighbours, and friends and all Muslims in the world, those who are still alive and those who have died. He requested Allâh to protect the living present and absent.

He asked Allâh to supply plenty of fish and protect the village fishermen from harm at sea (whilst saying this, he lowered his voice).

He asked Allâh to grant that whoever dies may die in faith. O Allâh! Do not deprive us of this reward and do not make us fall into a trial.

He asked Allâh to bestow the happiness in the world and on the day of judgement upon the living.

At the end of each recited *do'a*, all followers intoned *âmîn* (please approve oh Allâh) with individual prayers. The prayer leader closed the *do'a* session with the collective chanting of verses of the *sûrah al-Fâtihah* (QS 1:1-7) "which contains the essence of the entire Qur'ân".

In the middle of the east season the *khanduri rayeuk* is held. In this *khanduri* a buffalo is slaughtered. The reason of performing the *khanduri* in the middle of the east season is that the invited guests can be served with their marine catches such as fish, shrimp and the like. To do so, the *panglima laôt* together with his staff, the boat owners and fishermen held a meeting in order to decide the day for *khanduri* and how much money will be collected from each fisherman and boat owner. Fishermen and boat owners are the only donators in this *khanduri*, therefore the amount of money collected are higher than that of in Lhok Pawoh, southern Aceh. Each fisherman is asked to donate Rp. 200.000, while from the boat owners are asked to donate Rp. 250.000 for each. The money is used for buying a buffalo, cooking spices and other needed materials including for giving charity to the *Qur'an* reciters and orphans. Thursday is chosen as the day for the *khanduri laôt* because the fishermen believe that this day is a good day among others. In addition, they want to keep what their ancestors had already done; therefore they never perform the *khanduri* on the other days. The *khanduri* is performed at the seashore as they believe the seashore is the place without the possessor. Thus, it is a good place to recite the *do'a* to be easily granted by Allah as the owner of the world.

Many people are invited to this *khanduri* including *imam*, *tengku*, village staff, the head of regency, Indonesian legislative assembly, the head of district, the leader of police district, the leader of army district, *panglima laôt* of other *lhok*, orphans, poor, the representative of fisheries department of Aceh Jaya, and some other people. In terms of orphans, the committee invite the orphans from three nearby elementary schools and give alms to them Rp. 50.000 for each.²⁹ In the night before the *khanduri*, twelve people are invited to the seashore for reciting the verses of *Qur'an*. It begins approximately at 10.00 p.m. and ends at 02.00 a.m. The committee gives the alms to the reciters about Rp. 300.000 for each.

In Teunom, the slaughtered buffalo do not get special treatments like in Lhok Pawoh

²⁹In the past, orphans are given a set of school uniform.

such as bathing and cooling. A *tengku*, at night, kills the buffalo right after the reciting of *Qur'an* verses ends. The buffalo is skinned and the meat is taken for cooking, while the other parts of the buffalo such as bones, head and stomach were made as offering along with seven packets of white and black rice, a black and white chicken (alive), rice porridge, two eggs, and a packet of chicken and buffalo curry (the curry taken as offering is not allowed to be tasted at the time of cooking and no garlic used for spice).³⁰ All of the offering materials are put in a raft made from bamboos in size of 2 x 2 meters. The raft with offering is delivered using a boat which is sailed about one mile away from the coast. A person who is appointed to throw the offering then releases the offering to the sea by saying the same utterances like in Lhok Pawoh above. The releasing offering to the sea was done after all attended people finish reciting *do'a* and eating at the seashore.

According to the former of *panglima laôt*, the offering is made to *Putro Meganceng* and *Raja Bedoi*, the genies which believed as the sea keepers. In addition, it is also aimed to let the fish taste the *khanduri* performed by the fishermen at the seashore. Besides, the main aim of the *khanduri* is to thank Allah for supplying a plenty of fish in the previous season and it is also a *do'a* to Allah for giving much more fish in the current season. In contrast, a *teungku* says “the offering is idolatrous since it is intended for genies or whatever called and the offering contains something which still can be consumed by people”. *Panglima laot* adds that agreed with the *khanduri* as the way to thank Allah by doing praying, serving orphans and inviting people. But what he cannot agree with is about the offerings released to the sea which contains food and their intentions of releasing the offering to the sea as well. In addition, the local modernist groups that discussed disagree with releasing the offerings.

Conclusion

The ritual of *khanduri laôt* is closely connected with the life of the fishermen in the villages. In Blangporoh and in Lhok Pawoh, it is performed when the western winds start blowing. Since these cause high waves the fishermen cannot go out at sea. But in Teunom this *khanduri* is held at the beginning and in the middle of the east season so that invited guests can be served with their marine catches such as fish, shrimp and the like. The aim of this ritual is to ask Allâh to supply plenty of fish as well as to protect the fishermen from harm at sea.

In Blangporoh village of South Aceh, the fishermen slaughter two rams. At night the *imâm* of Blangporoh recites verses from the *Qur'an*, namely, the *sûrah Yâsîn*, the *sûrah al Fâtiḥah*, the *sûrah al-Ikhlâs* and other verses, and invokes *do'a*, *shamadiyah*, and *tahlîl*. Then the head, the contents of the stomach, and the bones of the slaughtered rams were wrapped in their hide to become an offering for the spirits of the sea. In the neighbouring

³⁰Unfortunately, no concrete data attained about why the offering consists of such materials. They said that they just keep doing what their ancestors had already done.

village of Lhok Pawoh of South West Aceh, however, on this occasion a buffalo was offered. It was first bathed and “cooled” before it was slaughtered. After the water buffalo had been skinned, the meat of the slaughtered buffalo was cooked on the seashore. The stomach, the bones, and rice are wrapped in its hide as an offering to the sea spirits. Having been placed in a fishing boat, all fishermen, skippers together with the *imâm* prayed for the Prophet Muḥammad’s well-being. Then the fishing boat sails out about one mile away from the coast, where the prayers are recited and the offering is thrown overboard. The same case in Teunom, Aceh Jaya in which the water buffalo’s bones, head and stomach were made as offering along with seven packets of white and black rice, a black and white chicken (alive), rice porridge, two eggs, and a packet of chicken and buffalo curry. This is the core of the *khanduri laôt* ritual. After a signal from one of the ritual leaders from the boat the invited guests, the orphans, and the poor standing on the beach began eating the *khanduri*.

In Lhok Pawoh, the offering was made to the Prophet Khaidir, the “owner of the fish”. He “is still alive” and is charged with the task “to take care of the oceans”. The Prophet Ilyas, who “is also still alive”, “takes care of the mountains”. But the offering was also given to *Putro Nurkaton*, the water spirit who takes care of the fish ponds in the sea, to *Sedang Tetap* who takes care of the coast sea, to *Sedang Mukmin* who takes care of the sea’s surface, to *Sedang Shaleh* who takes care of the waves, and to *Sedang Shalihin* who takes care of the deep sea. But in Teunom the offering was given to *Putro Meganceng* and *Raja Bedoi*, the genies which they believe as the sea possessors. In addition, the offering was also aimed to let the fish taste the *khanduri* performed by the fishermen at the seashore. After the offering has been made, from sunset to sunrise the *Qur’ân* was recited. At sunrise, the first special call to prayer (*azan*) was made. Then one uttered the “sunrise prayer”. In these prayers one asked Allâh to supply plenty of fish in the time to come.

The interesting finding from this ritual is that the village fishermen make a distinction between “the possessor of the sea” and “the owner of the sea”. They believe that the world is owned by Allah and parts of the worlds are possessed by spirits or non-social beings (see also Manan, 2016). Therefore, the cosmological exchange needs to be done and reciprocated gifts need to be carried out for the welfare of both parties (social and non-social beings). In addition, in the life of village fishermen, there are many problems found, such as the problems of catching fish and other marine species and the problems of exploiting the coral reefs and other sea resources. The *adat* of the ritual of *khanduri laôt* enables these conflicts to be solved, people to gather together, tension to be released and soothes exhausted souls enslaved by everyday responsibilities toward one’s family. Eating together during the ritual of *khanduri laôt* provides the opportunity to enjoy holidays as well as binds social relations closer and at the same time enhances a sense of understanding towards one another. Therefore not an exaggeration (from the social aspects) to insist that this ritual should be maintained, as it contributes to the sense of sociability, and to the identity of the Acehnese.

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