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COMMUNITY AGRICULTURE MANAGEMENT IN THE GAYO HIGHLANDS : INTEGRATION OF CUSTOMARY AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT AUTHORITIES

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Abstract

The Gayo Highlands are recognized as a highly productive agricultural region in Aceh, where traditional authority and village government play pivotal roles in managing agricultural practices. The primary objective of this research is to explore how village authorities and customary institutions collaborate in agricultural management and to identify the dynamics of their interactions. This study employs qualitative research methods, specifically a case study approach, to investigate the collaboration between these two governing entities in Aceh Tengah. Utilizing snowball sampling, key informants were identified through a gatekeeper, enabling in-depth interviews and observations of community dynamics. Data were collected from primary sources, including interviews with local leaders, and secondary sources such as legislation and scholarly articles. The findings reveal that the Reje (Village Head) validates directives from traditional authorities like KejurunBlang and Pengulu Uten, while traditional authorities support state policies. This dual authority framework necessitates strengthened dialogue, community empowerment, and collaborative decision-making. Recommendations include forming collaborative teams and continuous evaluation to adapt to local dynamics. By enhancing cooperation between traditional and state authorities, this study highlights the potential for sustainable agricultural development and improved community well-being in the Gayo Highlands.

INTRODUCTION

The Gayo Highlands is widely recognized as a highly productive agricultural region in Aceh. The arable land in *Tanoh Gayo* has resulted in a prevalent inclination towards agricultural pursuits among the local populace. Aceh Tengah (Central Aceh) has established Arabica coffee and green tobacco as prominent and iconic agricultural

commodities from the region. The community's production of two commodities is governed by the customary (adat) institution and the local village government.

Traditional or local institutions, specifically customary ones, play a crucial role in socializing the dynamics of development in rural regions (Agrawal 2018; Lubell, Feiock, and de la Cruz 2009). The management of community agriculture in Aceh involves the intersection of traditional institutions, namely *Pawang Glee/Uteun*. The Aceh governance system is founded on customary law, whereas the *Keujreun Blang* is a recognized unit of customary authority within the Aceh government structure. *KeujreunBlang*, as a local governmental organization, is responsible for overseeing all governmental matters pertaining to rice fields within its jurisdiction (Azis 2018). This jurisdiction encompasses various domains, including agriculture, irrigation, allotment, transactions related to rice fields, environmental concerns, the establishment and execution of rice field traditions, and the dispensation of justice to maintain adherence to these customs (Arzam 2012; Djuned 2008). Despite its concentrated authority, *Keujreun Blang* does not function in an authoritarian manner, as the management of rice-related issues is relatively straightforward and consistently communicated to the community members.

Similarly, the authority of *Pawang Glee/Uteun*, as outlined *Keujreun Blang*, is emphasized in Qanun No. 10 of 2008, which pertains to customary institutions in another establishment. The *Pawang Uteun/Glee* is tasked with safeguarding the forest and implementing decisions that promote environmental sustainability while avoiding any adverse impacts. The *Pawang Uteun/Glee* is responsible for a range of duties and functions, including safeguarding forest resources, granting permission for the opening of plantation land in forested areas, regulating hunting activities, preserving tree meadows that house beehives, prohibiting and penalizing illegal logging activities, organizing the planting of trees along streams and rivers, managing the utilization of forest products, and enforcing established rules and customs in accordance with local community agreements (Adnan 2020; Nasution 2017). Suffice it to say that the *Pawang Glee/Uteun* bears responsibility for the forest authority and its associated connections, which are subject to legal provisions and localities within the immediate vicinity.

Furthermore, the Village Government in Gayo, which operates under the special privileges and special autonomy scheme of Aceh (Zainal 2016), serves as a local governing body that is closely connected to the community. In terms of its state authority,

it actively contributes to the management of the community's livelihood, particularly in the field of agriculture. This phenomenon has given rise to two distinct authorities that coexist within the social order. This serves as the foundational framework for researchers to explore the dynamics that transpire within these two established entities. In order to identify a collaborative approach between village authorities and customary institutions in Gayo, Aceh, this study follows a comprehensive process. It begins with an examination of relevant literature and is further reinforced by on-site empirical data gathered through semi-structured interviews. These interviews involve village government elites, traditional authorities (*Keujreun Blang* and *Pengulu Uten*), local farmers, and community members who interact with these entities.

While several studies have explored the roles of customary institutions and village governments separately in managing natural resources and community livelihoods, there is limited research on how these entities collaborate in the context of community agriculture management in the Gayo Highlands. This gap presents an opportunity to examine how synergies or potential conflicts between traditional institutions and village governance affect the sustainability of agriculture in this region. This study aims to analyze the forms of collaboration between village government and customary institutions (*Keujreun Blang* and *Pawang Glee/Uteun*) in the management of community agriculture in the Gayo Highlands of Aceh. By identifying best practices and challenges in this collaboration, the study seeks to provide recommendations for enhancing the effectiveness of agricultural resource management in a sustainable manner.

The novelty of this research lies in its holistic approach, integrating the roles of both customary institutions and village government in the specific context of community agriculture management in the Gayo Highlands. The study not only explores the interactions between these two authorities but also how they contribute to food security and agricultural sustainability in a region marked by unique cultural and ecological characteristics.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed qualitative research methods, specifically utilizing a case study approach, in order to systematically investigate and address the research inquiries at hand (Creswell 2012). The selection of Aceh Tengah as the study location was based on its significance as a hub for the cultivation of key agricultural commodities, namely

Arabica coffee and green tobacco, both of which are commercially vital to the local economy. The specific conditions of this sub-district, including its agricultural potential, made it an ideal case for investigating the interaction between local governance and traditional practices.

In this particular instance, the researchers employ the snowball sampling technique to ascertain the individuals who qualify as key informants, as well as other informants. The Snowball technique is implemented through a series of sequential steps: Initially, the researcher employs a gatekeeper, typically the individual who first receives the researcher at the research site and possesses the ability to provide guidance regarding the individuals to be interviewed or observed, thereby facilitating the acquisition of pertinent information pertaining to the research subject. Subsequently, upon the conclusion of the initial interview, the researcher requests the informant to designate the subsequent individual to be interviewed, thereby augmenting the researcher's dataset. Subsequently, the researcher proceeded to solicit additional informants in order to augment the extant dataset.

Furthermore, supplementary data was acquired in the form of secondary sources, specifically documents that encompassed pertinent information pertaining to the two entities in question. Then, the researchers also collected data from various sources including legislation, scholarly articles, books, reports, newspapers, websites, and other relevant documents. Data collection methods also involved participant and non-participant observation to gain insights into the interactions between village authorities and customary institutions during community meetings, agricultural activities, and other social settings. Observations were recorded in detailed field notes to supplement interview data. Thematic analysis was conducted on the interview transcripts, field notes, and observation data, with particular focus on themes related to governance collaboration, agricultural management practices, and conflict resolution mechanisms.

Document analysis of secondary sources was used to provide a broader contextual background, supporting the findings from primary data. This method allowed the researchers to triangulate data from multiple sources, ensuring the robustness of the research findings. Through this comprehensive approach, the study aimed to provide an in-depth understanding of how village authorities and customary institutions collaborate in managing agricultural practices in the Gayo Highlands, and how these interactions influence the sustainability and development of local agriculture.

Literature Review

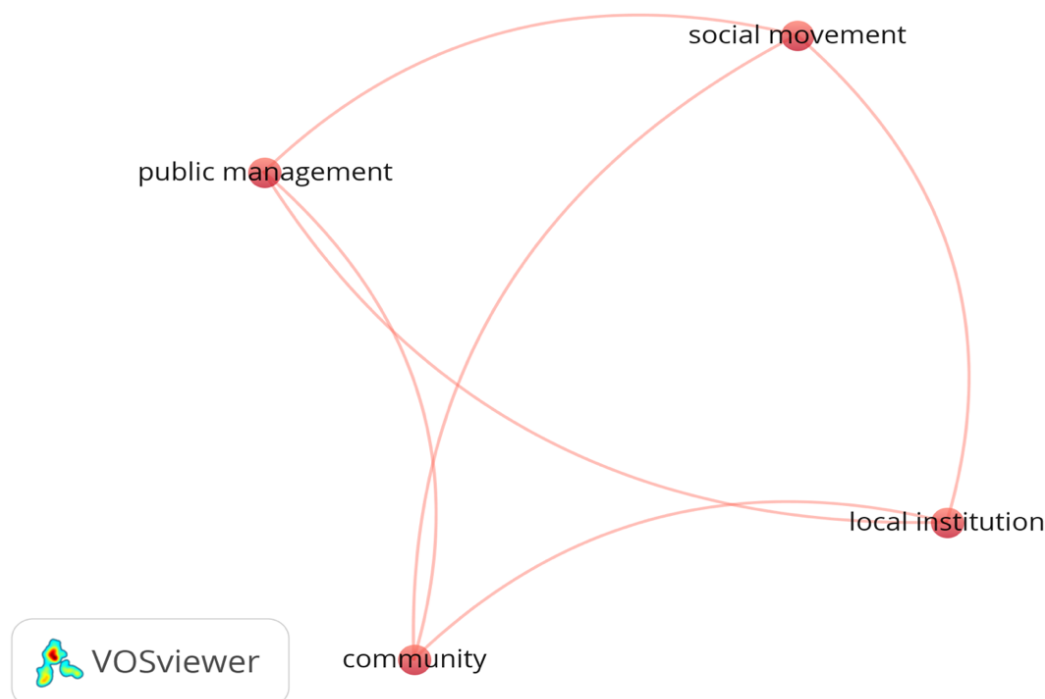
Prior scholarly investigations have exclusively focused on the function (Darwis et al. 2016; Khausar 2017) of a local authority body in relation to this matter. However, the authors of this study present a unique perspective on the phenomenon of authority integration in the management of individuals' lives. Based on prior scholarly investigations, the examination of authority integration has been explored by various researchers; however, no specific attention has been given to the domain of community agricultural management. The integration of authority refers to the amalgamation of two distinct sources of authority within a given society. Typically, this process involves the convergence of governmental authorities with long-established cultural institutions that have become deeply ingrained in the lives of individuals, such as Customary Institutions or other local authorities. According to a study conducted by Ridho et al. (2019), the interdependence of village (*kampung*) and custom in Indonesia is evident, as comprehending the dynamics of a village necessitates an understanding of the customary practices observed within it. Consequently, customary holds significant relevance within rural communities.

When considering Aceh, it is observed that the Gampong Government, which was previously a customary unit with inherent and comprehensive autonomy under the leadership of the customary government unit, has progressively transformed into a governmental apparatus and evolved into a socio-political entity responsible for executing state functions, albeit retaining its original nomenclature (Afadlal and Gayatri 2008). This observation demonstrates that there has been a consolidation of authority within the Gampong periodization. Previously, this authority existed independently, but it has now become intertwined with the authority of the state. There remains a significant gap in the existing body of research concerning the incorporation of integration principles within the governance of governmental institutions. Specifically, the authority sector has received limited attention, with prevailing studies primarily concentrating on the role of influential institutions and individuals within society. According to the findings of a study conducted by Muazzinah et al. (2021), the collaboration between the government and the Ulama in addressing the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic entails leveraging the Ulama's charisma to influence social dynamics through a religious framework. This approach aims to facilitate community acceptance by

providing a rationale that is more easily comprehensible than the government's normative, regulatory, and budgetary measures. In order to garner public acceptance of the government's policy aimed at addressing the COVID-19 pandemic, it is imperative to consider the sentiments of the Aceh population.

Another case pertains to the findings of studies conducted by researchers Natalia, (2019) and Nugroho, (2020) which highlight the importance of granting legal recognition to customary institutions as local entities. This recognition enables these institutions to effectively exercise their authority and collaborate with government programs aimed at benefiting the community (Jayaputra 2014). By providing this recognition, local authorities will be better prepared to fulfill their assigned duties and responsibilities (Anam et al. 2018). Nevertheless, this particular authority lacks integration with other authorities as it solely executes directives from higher authorities (Fadli 2018; Hanandini et al. 2021; Yuliyanti 2018)

Figure.1. A network map of authorities' integration in institutions from previous studies



Source: VOSviewer

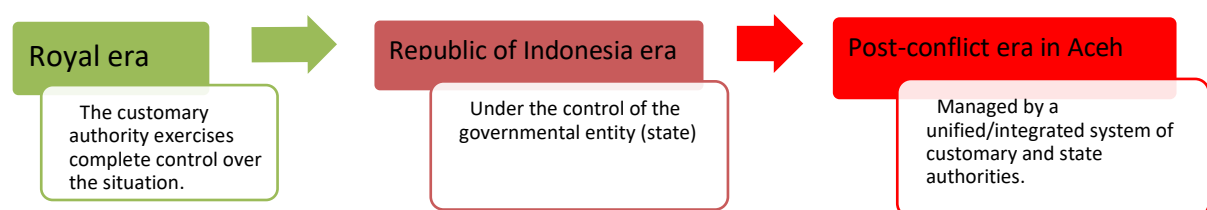
Based on a comprehensive analysis of previous research that the authors have elucidated through the utilization of VOSviewer, it becomes apparent that the imperative to effectively govern public goods and uphold the presence and impact of an authoritative

entity within a societal and governmental framework serves as the impetus for the amalgamation of authority into an institutional setting. This has become an illustration of the intricate dynamics between customary authority and village government in the context of community agriculture management in the Gayo highlands, which we have reviewed and presented in this article. Through an in-depth review of existing literature and empirical evidence, we have elucidated the efforts made to integrate the authority of these two entities. The findings of this study shed light on the complex interplay between customary authority and village government, highlighting their joint endeavors to effectively manage community agriculture in the Gayo highlands.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The consideration of community agriculture management in the Gayo Highlands is of paramount importance for both governing bodies and local farmers. The presence of dual authorities within the social structure has engendered diverse dynamics and phases in the management of agriculture in the Gayo region. The management of community agriculture in the Gayo Highlands has undergone a series of distinct phases and dynamic shifts. Based on the findings derived from the interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs) conducted by the researcher, this particular phase can be traced back to the Age of Empires, which occurred prior to the independence of the region. Subsequently, it transitioned into the Age of the Republic of Indonesia, marking a significant shift in the socio-political landscape. Finally, the phase culminated in the Post-Conflict Aceh Period, commonly referred to as the Aceh Peace Era. The subsequent discourse provides a comprehensive account of the successive stages that community agricultural management in the Gayo Highlands region has undergone over time.

Figure 2. Agricultural Management Phase in Gayo (Results of the Gayo Traditional Council's Focus Group Discussion)



Source: Helsinki, 2005

Based on the aforementioned phases, it is evident that agricultural management in the Gayo Highlands during the kingdom era was entirely subject to the jurisdiction of traditional authorities duly appointed by the local royal sultan. The Acehese community living along the coast uses the term "*Keujreuen Blang*," and the Acehese (Gayo) community living in the highlands uses the term "*Kejurun Belang*," to describe the management practices in the field of rice cultivation. The management process commences with activities such as planting, sowing, fertilizing, and ultimately harvesting the rice fields. A *Kejurun Belang*, who acts as the overseeing authority in this situation, provides the instructions for carrying out these activities. The instructions provided by *Kejurun Belang*, situated in rural areas with rice cultivation, exhibit distinct characteristics. The present discourse pertains to the dissemination of instructions in the form of *Kejurun Belang*, a customary practice involving the planting of a "white flag". This symbolic gesture serves as an indicator for farmers, granting them permission to commence the process of rice cultivation in the designated rice fields. The *Kejurun Belang*, a notable agricultural phenomenon, exhibits a distinctive behavior by promptly descending upon the designated rice fields, thereby signifying the commencement of the planting season. This action serves as a signal for fellow farmers to initiate their own planting activities in a synchronized manner. The instructions pertaining to rice field management exhibit regional variations, contingent upon the presence of rice fields, and are contingent upon the expertise and knowledge of the indigenous *Kejurun Belang*.

The management of agriculture in proximity to forest environments presents distinct characteristics compared to conventional agricultural practices. In the coastal communities of Aceh, this responsibility falls under the purview of a traditional authority known as *Pawang Glee* or *Pawang Uteun*. Conversely, in the Gayo highland communities, this role is commonly referred to as "*Pengulu Uten*". The customary authority known as "*Pengulu Uten*" assumes the responsibility of overseeing the management of forest resources in a manner that ensures their sustainability and facilitates their public accessibility. The ability of *Pengulu Uteun* to assess and designate suitable land for cultivating coffee or other predominant commodities based on the inherent characteristics and environmental conditions of the indigenous soil is noteworthy. In the realm of forest management, the allocation of responsibilities pertaining to prohibitions, conflict resolution within plantations or forests, and recommendations for effective forest management were entrusted to *Pengulu Uteun*, the traditional authority vested

with comprehensive jurisdiction during that period. The present findings provide evidence that the agricultural and forest management practices in the Gayo highlands during the royal era were unequivocally subject to the jurisdiction of the traditional governing body and held accountable to the ruling local sultan.

During the period of the Republic of Indonesia, significant transformations were observed in the traditional authorities of Aceh, particularly in the Gayo Highlands. These changes were implemented in accordance with national regulations, with the aim of fostering national unity. The paradigm shift in governance and regulatory frameworks has resulted in a significant transformation of the roles and responsibilities of traditional authorities in the realm of local community agriculture. These erstwhile figures of authority, who once wielded substantial control, have now been relegated to mere symbolic representations devoid of any functional efficacy. This phenomenon is particularly pronounced in various regions of Aceh, where the traditional authorities no longer exercise their pre-independence operational capacities. The current management structure of the Department of Agriculture/Agriculture Service, an agency of state authority, is responsible for overseeing all agricultural operations. The protracted Aceh conflict made this condition worse and seriously damaged the social, cultural, and economic fabric of the Acehnese people. Moreover, the conflict had profound implications for the traditional authority, which, although existing in mere semblance and devoid of any functional capacity, remained unrecognized by the state.

Transitioning to the subsequent phase, which has ushered Aceh into a novel chapter, namely the post-conflict era of Aceh (Aceh Peace), influencing agricultural management, and the re-surgence of customary authority in Aceh. In the realm of the Gayo social structure, the agricultural domain is governed by traditional figures known as *Kejurun Belang* and *Pengulu Uten*. These traditional authorities hold significant influence and play a pivotal role in the agricultural sector within the Gayo community. The recognition of the existence of these two traditional authorities, namely *Kejurun Belang* and *Pengulu Uten*, has been officially acknowledged by the state as per the provisions outlined in Law No. 11 of 2006, which pertains to the governance of Aceh. The reinstatement and integration of customary authorities, namely *Kejurun Belang* and *Pengulu Uten*, into Acehnese society, particularly among the Gayo people residing in the central region of Aceh, has been observed.

The state's re-recognition of customary authority entails that both authorities will

operate within the same domain as the local farming community. *Keujurun Belang*, the traditional governing body in the rice fields and farmers sector, will engage with the state authority, overseen by the local Agriculture department. This agency also has jurisdiction over the empowerment of rice fields and farmers. Then *Pengulu Uteun*, who possesses authority over forest sustainability management, must confront and intersect with the state authority wielded by the local government through the local Plantation and Forestry Department, which is likewise accountable for forest sustainability management. Furthermore, the established traditional authority must confront the relatively less influential state authority, *Reje*, who serves as the village head in the Aceh special autonomy format and oversees the village government in the Gayo highlands. The inevitable phenomenon of overlapping power in the issuance of policies or instructions has resulted in confusion among farmers when cultivating their individual rice fields or gardens. In order to address this matter, the two governing bodies have convened and endeavored to devise wise policies to ensure that the policies and directives issued by both entities are genuinely beneficial and focused on the welfare of farmers, while also not degrading the integrity of both authorities, particularly the traditional ones, which have coexisted and progressed alongside each other.

Wise Policies in Integration Authority

According to field findings, the integration of authorities has led to the development of various wise policies that do not degrade the authority of traditional institutions or the state. Naturally, this implies that farmers under the jurisdiction of these two authorities have the ability to adhere to the instructions or policies they issue. The following are several examples of findings from researchers regarding policies or regulations formulated through the two authorities (customary and state), which the author presents in Table 1 below:

Table 1. Policies formulated by integrating two authorities

No	Customary Authority	State Authority	Impact
1	Give a sign indicating the commencement of the rice planting season by placing a white flag in the centre	The traditional authorities have indicated that farmers should promptly proceed to the fields by providing	Farmers adhere to these instructions and directives in order to increase their

	of the rice field as a directive to the farmers. (Actor: <i>Kejurun Belang</i>).	official directives to encourage or command them to do so. (Actor: <i>Reje Kampung</i>).	confidence in their ability to plant rice in the fields without concern for technical and social errors.
2	Establish a law that forbids the removal of specific trees due to local customs, social norms, and cultural practices. Provisions for farmers to follow when establishing plantation land within the forest should accompany the permitted tree cutting. (Actor: <i>Pengulu Uteun</i>)	Enact official or village ordinances specifying which trees are permissible to be felled, along with accompanying stipulations that must be adhered to, and enforce penalties or sanctions for any infractions. (Actor: <i>Reje Kampung, Plantation and Forestry Department</i>)	When farmers want to open plantation land in the forest, they become more cautious to prevent other parties from destroying the forest for their own gain, ensuring the sustainability of the forest and its continued benefits to the local community.
3	Resolving disputes and conflicts among farming communities over rice irrigation water. (Actor: <i>Kejurun Belang</i>)	Determine the conclusions derived from the conflict management outcomes in farming communities concerning the battle for rice irrigation water, thereby reinforcing the outcomes of conflict resolution by customary leaders. (Actor: <i>Reje kampung, Department of Agriculture and local sub-district head</i>)	All farmers can feel the irrigation water flowing to all rice fields, enabling them to achieve the potential rice harvest.
4	The state authorities responsible for environmental maintenance and aesthetics derive advantages from	State authorities' policies and regulations are becoming more socio-politically powerful, and they have the potential to successfully implement all environmental	Farmers' lives will be healthier due to a clean and hygienic environment, which directly correlates to the sustainability of their rice

effectively managing and cleanliness and sustainability fields and their directing drainage programs that impact aspirations for economic systems in rice fields and communities. (Actor: stability. organizing trash disposal Environmental Department, in designated areas. <i>Reje kampung</i>) (Actor: <i>Kejurun Belang</i> or <i>Pengulu Rerak</i>)

Source: Processed By Researchers From Secondary Data

Upon examining Table 1, it is evident that the policies or directives given by both agencies effectively complement each other in addressing issues within their respective domains, and are applied judiciously by them. The notion of collaborative governance indirectly classifies the integration of the two authorities, as it promotes a value of collaboration both prior to and following their efforts to address or establish laws or regulations. Consequently, the issues faced by the agricultural community residing under these two types of authority would directly affect the resolution of the challenges encountered by farmers in the Gayo Highlands. In addition, it also affects the conservation of traditional authority, which is a distinctive asset of Aceh-Gayo customs that will eventually have its own market value as cultural tourism within the context of local ecotourism.

Dynamics of Customary Authority and the State

Agricultural management in the Gayo highlands has re-emerged as a traditional authority in the midst of agricultural communities, which is recognized by the state and works side by side with it in the implementation of its authority. In the exercise of their authority, there are still several areas where traditional influence is strong, so *Pengulu Uten* and *Kejurun Belang* can issue instructions or policies from their institutions to regulate or manage agriculture and forestry where traditional authority exists without having to rely on state authority, in this case *Reje*, which is unite in the *Sarat Opat* unit. However, there are several villages whose traditional authority has been lost for a long time and are having difficulty rebuilding the traditional authority that once existed in their village, so indirectly, the authority of the traditional authority is fused and integrated into the *Sarat Opat* format, precisely the authority of *Petue* or *Reje*.

Sarat Opat represents a village-level administrative entity within the Gayo community

framework, encompassing distinct branches of governance, namely *Reje* (executive), *Rakyat Geunap Mupakat* (legislative), *Petue* (traditional affairs/customary court), and *Imem* (religious affairs). Within the framework of the *Sarat Opat* order, it is pertinent to highlight the existence of two legal foundations that encompass both customary and state authorities. The establishment of *Reje* and *Rakyat Geunap Mupakat* (RGM) as state authorities at the village level in the Gayo Highlands is in accordance with the legal framework provided by the Regulation of the Minister of Home Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia. This regulation is based on the Village Head and the Village Consultative Body (BPD) as outlined in the legislation. However, in the context of the special autonomy granted to the region, as stipulated in Law No. 11 of 2006 concerning the Governance of Aceh, certain adaptations were made. Consequently, the position of the Village Head was transformed into *Reje*, while the Village Consultative Body (BPD) was restructured to become the *Rakyat Geunap Mupakat* (RGM). In the context of the Gayo social order, it is noteworthy to mention the presence of traditional authorities, namely *Petue* and *Imem*. These entities have acquired their legitimacy and recognition from the state, as evidenced by their inclusion in Law No. 11 of 2006, which specifically addresses the governance of Aceh. This legal framework serves as a basis for acknowledging the existence and role of *Petue* and *Imem* within the broader societal structure. The convergence of the governing bodies of these two legal frameworks, namely *Sarat Opat*, facilitates the harmonious coexistence and mutual reinforcement of customary and state laws. The present scenario enables the seamless integration of customary and state authorities in the realm of agricultural management, facilitating the effective execution of their primary tasks and functions while achieving harmonization.

The re-recognition of *Pengulu Uten* and *Kejurun Belang* carries substantial ramifications for the social and political framework of the Gayo community, while also exerting influence on agricultural administration in every hamlet within the Gayo highlands, particularly in Central Aceh. The crucial function of *Pengulu Uten* and *Kejurun Belang* as traditional leaders has established the foundation for social stability at the local level. They serve not only as authoritative authorities but also as mediators in settling disagreements and preserving equilibrium in community life.

As a result of this re-recognition, agricultural management in each village has experienced diverse transformations. Multiple communities have witnessed a surge in sustainable agricultural endeavors and the implementation of contemporary

technologies, aligning with the guidance of *Pengulu Uten* and *Kejurun Belang* to promote innovation and sustainable progress. However, several villages encounter difficulties in adjusting to these changes, including advancements in technology within agricultural sectors and the re-establishment of traditional leadership within the community. This occurs, particularly when there is dissent or opposition from a segment of the community towards these modifications. The lack of practical understanding regarding the traditional authority institutions that have evolved over generations poses the primary obstacle to the re-recognition of the *Kejurun Belang* and *Pengulu Uten* (customary authorities). As a result, the farmers and residents of the village are unfamiliar with and unaccustomed to the concept of customary authorities. Undoubtedly, if this continues without caution, the revival of traditional authority will be slow, and there is concern that it may once again fade away. It would be unfortunate if this situation persisted.

Pengulu Uten and *Kejurun Belang* play a significant role in making decisions on the management of natural resources in the agriculture sector. *Pengulu Uten* and *Kejurun Belang* possess the ability to provide guidance and influence the development of new policies or modifications in the agricultural system based on their perspectives and principles. Hence, it is imperative to establish collaboration among customary authorities, the government, and the community in order to achieve a mutually advantageous accord.

The re-recognition of *Pengulu Uten* and *Kejurun Belang* ultimately brought about a transformative shift in the social and political structure of the Gayo community. Effectively addressing the task of preserving indigenous knowledge and cultural customs while aligning with modernity and economic advancement is of utmost importance. Hence, the cooperation between these two entities will be crucial in guiding the local population of Central Aceh towards sustainable and equitable progress.

CONCLUSION

The research results show that in the Gayo highland region, there is a dynamic collaboration between the two main authorities-namely the traditional authority and the village government - collaborating and sharing power in agricultural management. The *Reje* (Village Head), representing state authority in the asymmetric decentralization scheme and special autonomy of Aceh, validates any directives or policies issued by traditional authorities such as *Kejurun Belang* and *Pengulu Uten*. Conversely, traditional

authorities reinforce directives or policies issued by state authorities (village governments) by participating in or formally supporting such directives or policies.

The findings indicate the integration of traditional authorities and village government in the highlands of Gayo requires strengthened dialogue, increased awareness, and community empowerment. It is recommended to form collaborative teams, develop joint policies, and adopt an inclusive approach to decision-making. Continuous evaluation is necessary to adjust the approach to local dynamics, and collaboration with external parties can enrich resources and support integration efforts. These steps are expected to optimize the potential for collaboration between traditional authority and village government, achieve sustainable agricultural development, and enhance the well-being of the community in the highlands of Gayo. The results of this research provide a significant contribution in understanding the cooperation mechanisms between formal and customary structures in special autonomous regions, which in the end can become a relevant management model to be applied in other regions that have similar characteristics.

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