

Research Article

Preserving Cultural Heritage in Aceh: Legal Frameworks and Community Initiatives in Gampong Pande

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ABSTRACT: This paper examines the efforts to preserve cultural heritage in Aceh, Indonesia, with a specific focus on Gampong Pande, one of the oldest and most historically significant areas in Banda Aceh, Indonesia. As a site of early Islamic civilization in the region, Gampong Pande holds valuable tangible and intangible cultural assets, including ancient tombs, artifacts, oral traditions, and Islamic scholarly heritage. However, these cultural resources face increasing threats due to urban development, environmental degradation, and a lack of comprehensive preservation strategies. The study explores how the legal frameworks at the national and regional levels, particularly the implementation of Qanun (Acehnese regional regulations), are employed to protect and manage cultural heritage. These legal instruments provide a foundation for cultural governance, yet their effectiveness often depends on enforcement mechanisms and institutional coordination. In parallel, this study emphasizes the critical role of local communities in cultural preservation. It highlights how the residents of Gampong Pande have initiated grassroots movements to protect historical sites, resist commercial encroachment, and revive cultural practices. These initiatives demonstrate the importance of community participation, local wisdom, and intergenerational knowledge transfer in heritage conservation. This research underscores the need for a more integrated and participatory approach that combines top-down legal policies with bottom-up community action. It calls for stronger collaboration among government agencies, civil society, academic institutions, and local leaders to ensure the sustainable preservation of cultural heritage in Aceh. In conclusion, the preservation of Gampong Pande's heritage means protecting physical structures and maintaining the region's historical identity, spiritual legacy, and cultural continuity amid ongoing modernization and change.

KEYWORDS: Cultural Heritage, Aceh, Gampong Pande.

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Submitted: 27 May 2025 | Reviewed: 23 June 2025 | Revised: 17 August 2025 | Accepted: 27 August 2025

I. INTRODUCTION

The preservation of cultural heritage is a critical issue globally, and Aceh, Indonesia, is no exception. With its rich history and unique cultural assets, Aceh's Gampong Pande serves as a focal point for discussions on cultural preservation. The village is home to numerous archaeological sites and artefacts that reflect the region's historical significance. The importance of preserving such heritage lies not only in maintaining the region's the cultural identity but also in ensuring that future generations have the opportunity to learn from and appreciate their historical legacy. According to UNESCO, cultural heritage preservation contributes to social cohesion and economic development, making it a vital component of sustainable development strategies.¹

In Aceh, the need for effective legal frameworks and community initiatives is paramount. The province has faced numerous challenges, including natural disasters and socio-political conflicts, which have threatened its cultural heritage. The 2004 tsunami, for instance, significantly damaged many sites in Aceh, including those in Gampong Pande. The preservation efforts in Aceh require a multifaceted approach, combining legal measures with grassroots initiatives.²

The current legal frameworks for cultural heritage preservation in Aceh are governed by both national and regional laws. Law No. 11/2010 on Cultural Heritage provides the foundation for heritage protection in Indonesia.³ However, its implementation at the regional level, particularly in Aceh, often faces

¹ Bayan F El Faouri & Magda Sibley, "Balancing Social and Cultural Priorities in the UN 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for UNESCO World Heritage Cities" (2024) 16:14 Sustainability at 1; Sophia Labadi et al, *Heritage and the Sustainable Development Goals: Policy Guidance for Heritage and Development Actors* (ICOMOS, 2021) at 27; Hanbyeol Jang & Jeremy Mennis, "The Role of Local Communities and Well-Being in UNESCO World Heritage Site Conservation: An Analysis of the Operational Guidelines, 1994–2019" (2021) 13:13 Sustainability at 1-2.

² Amirul Hadi, "Aceh in History: Preserving Traditions and Embracing Modernity" (2016) 37:2 MIQOT: Jurnal Ilmu-ilmu Keislaman at 10; Mujiburrahman Mujiburrahman et al, "Acehnese Women as Guardians of Cultural Heritage: An Analysis of Their Role in the Conservation of Arts and Traditions" (2024) 5:1 Malikussaleh Social and Political Reviews at 52.

³ Lunariana Lubis, Bintoro Wardiyanto & Erna Setijaningrum, "Heritage Conservation in Indonesia: Policy Review" (2024) Perspektif Hukum at 131; Erwin Mansyur Ugu Saraka, Muhammad Yaasiin Raya, & Syarifuddin, "Implementation Aspect Of Law No. 11, 2010 In Efforts To Improve The Economic Welfare Of The Community In Relation To The Conservation Of Cultural Heritage" (2025) 7:1 Iqthisady: Jurnal Hukum Ekonomi Syariah at 30.

challenges due to limited resources and awareness. The Aceh Cultural Heritage Conservation Agency (BPCB Aceh) plays a crucial role in implementing these laws and ensuring compliance. Nonetheless, the effectiveness of these legal measures is contingent upon active community participation and support.⁴

Community initiatives in Gampong Pande have been instrumental in supplementing legal efforts. Local communities have taken ownership of their cultural assets, organising activities and programmes to raise awareness and promote preservation. Community leaders and local NGOs have collaborated to document and protect historical sites, often working in partnership with governmental bodies and international organisations. These initiatives have contributed to preserving cultural heritage and fostering a sense of pride and identity among the residents.⁵

Furthermore, the legal frameworks for cultural heritage preservation in Aceh are primarily guided by national legislation, with specific adaptations to accommodate regional contexts. Law No. 11/2010 is the cornerstone of heritage protection in Indonesia, outlining the criteria for designation, preservation, and management of cultural heritage sites. It mandates the identification and registration of cultural heritage assets, providing a legal basis for their protection. However, its implementation in Aceh faces unique challenges, as noted by the Aceh Cultural Heritage Conservation Agency.⁶ One of them is the region's special autonomy status.

Following the Helsinki Memorandum of Understanding in 2005,⁷ Aceh was granted special autonomy, allowing it to enact regional regulations (Qanun) that align with its cultural and religious values. While this autonomy provides opportunities for tailored heritage preservation strategies, it also complicates the

⁴ Romi Saputra, "Governance Frameworks and Cultural Preservation in Indonesia: Balancing Policy and Heritage" (2024) 11:3 *Journal of Ethnic and Cultural Studies* at 40.

⁵ Peter Willmot, *Community Initiatives: Patterns and Prospects* (California: Policy Studies Institute, 1989) at 117.

⁶ Arfiansyah & Irfan Syam, "Permasalahan Pelestarian Cagar Budaya di Kota Banda Aceh" (2021) 12:1 *Jurnal Ekonomi dan Pembangunan* at 38.

⁷ Renée Jeffery, "Aceh, Indonesia: Separatism, Peace and the Role of the International Community" in *Negotiating Peace*, 1st edn (Cambridge University Press, 2021) at 127.

integration of national and regional legal frameworks. The harmonisation of these laws is crucial for effective heritage management in Aceh.⁸

The role of the Aceh Cultural Heritage Conservation Agency (BPCB Aceh) is pivotal in bridging the gap between national and regional regulations. The agency is responsible for overseeing the implementation of heritage laws, conducting site assessments, and providing technical support for preservation projects. Despite these efforts, the agency often faces resource constraints, limiting its capacity to effectively monitor and protect all heritage sites in the region. A report by the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture highlights the need for increased funding and capacity building to enhance the agency's effectiveness.⁹

In addition to legal and institutional challenges, the enforcement of heritage laws in Aceh is often hindered by a lack of public awareness and engagement. Many residents are unaware of the legal protections afforded to cultural heritage sites, leading to inadvertent damage or neglect. To address this issue, BPCB Aceh has initiated awareness campaigns and educational programmes aimed at fostering a sense of ownership and responsibility among local communities. Schools and universities also participate by integrating cultural heritage education into curricula.

The legal frameworks for cultural heritage preservation in Aceh are robust, yet their effectiveness is contingent upon the integration of national and regional laws, adequate resourcing, and community engagement. The challenges in implementing these frameworks underscore the need for a coordinated approach involving all stakeholders, including government agencies, local communities,

⁸ Zya Dyena Meutia, Roos Akbar & Denny Zulkaidi, "Heritage Planning and Rethinking The Meaning and Values of Designating Heritage Sites in a Post-Disaster Context: The Case of Aceh, Indonesia" (2018) 158:1 IOP Conference Series Earth and Environmental Science at 18.

⁹ Christopher Silver, "Tourism, Cultural Heritage, and Human Rights in Indonesia: The Challenges of an Emerging Democratic Society" in Helaine Silverman & D Fairchild Ruggles, eds, *Cultural Heritage and Human Rights* (New York, NY: Springer, 2007) at 65; Muhammad Siddiq Armia et al, "Post Amendment of Judicial Review in Indonesia: Has Judicial Power Distributed Fairly?" (2022) 7:2 Journal of Indonesian Legal Studies at 540; Muhammad Siddiq Armia et al, "Introduction: Measuring Environmental Impacts And Judiciary Environments, The Critical Analysis" (2024) 9:1 Petita: Jurnal Kajian Hukum dan Syari'ah at 5.

and educational institutions. By strengthening these legal structures and fostering public awareness, Aceh can better protect its invaluable cultural heritage.

II. METHODOLOGY

The study employed a normative juridical method with a qualitative approach. This type of legal research focuses on examining legal norms, statutory regulations, and legal principles that govern the protection and preservation of cultural heritage at both national and regional levels. The normative juridical approach is particularly appropriate for analysing how laws are formulated, interpreted, and applied in real-world contexts, especially regarding cultural policies and heritage preservation.

The primary data sources include legal documents such as Law No. 11 of 2010 on Cultural Heritage, regional Qanun in Aceh, government decrees, and other relevant statutory instruments. The secondary data consists of academic literature, legal commentary, research reports, and historical records related to Aceh's cultural heritage. In addition to the legal analysis, the study incorporates qualitative data from literature review and document analysis, aiming to understand the role of legal frameworks and the community's involvement in cultural conservation efforts, especially in Gampong Pande. This methodology allowed for a deep interpretation of how formal legal structures intersect with societal values and local customs in shaping cultural preservation practices. Ultimately, this methodology enabled the researchers to assess the adequacy of the existing regulations and the effectiveness of their implementation through community participation and advocacy.

III. COMMUNITY INITIATIVES FOR PRESERVING CULTURAL HERITAGE IN INDONESIA

Indonesia, an archipelago of over 17,000 islands, is home to a rich tapestry of cultural heritage.¹⁰ The nation's cultural diversity is reflected in its languages, traditions, and historical sites. However, heritage preservation is a complex

¹⁰ Michael Vatikiotis, *Indonesia: Islands of the Imagination* (Tuttle Publishing, 2012) at 3.

challenge requiring concerted efforts from various stakeholders, including local communities. Community initiatives play a crucial role in preserving cultural heritage for future generations. This study explores the various community-driven efforts in Indonesia, highlighting their impact, challenges, and success stories.

Cultural heritage is an invaluable asset that contributes to a nation's identity and continuity. In Indonesia, cultural heritage includes tangible and intangible elements, such as historical sites, traditional crafts, music, dance, and oral traditions. The preservation of these elements is essential not only for maintaining cultural diversity but also for fostering national pride and a sense of unity. According to UNESCO, cultural heritage preservation can also have significant economic benefits, as it often boosts tourism and creates job opportunities.¹¹

The significance of preserving cultural heritage in Indonesia is underscored by the country's diverse ethnic groups, each with unique traditions and practices. For instance, the Toraja people of Sulawesi are renowned for their elaborate funeral ceremonies and traditional houses, known as Tongkonan. These cultural practices are crucial to the Toraja identity and attract foreign tourists. However, the rapid pace of modernisation and globalisation poses a threat to such traditions, making community-led preservation efforts even more critical.

Community initiatives across Indonesia have demonstrated innovative approaches to preserving cultural heritage. In Bali, for example, local communities have successfully integrated traditional practices with tourism, ensuring the sustainability of their cultural heritage. The Subak system, a traditional method of water management for rice paddies, has been recognised as a UNESCO World Heritage site. The local communities have played a pivotal

¹¹ UNESCO, "The Economic Benefits of Cultural Heritage Preservation" (2019), online: [unesco.org](https://www.unesco.org) <<https://www.unesco.org>>; Asrul Ibrahim Nur, "The Limits of Indonesia's Legal Framework for Electromobility: Regulatory and Sustainable Issues" (2022) 9:2 *Lentera Hukum* at 220; Erfina Fuadatul Khilmi, "Pembentukan Peraturan Daerah Syari'ah dalam Perspektif Hukum Tata Negara Pascareformasi" (2018) 5:1 *Lentera Hukum* at 55; Lovienna Renisitoresmi, Ikarini Dwi Widiyanti & Nuzulia Kumala Sari, "Perlindungan Hukum Bagi Investor di Sektor Pariwisata" (2016) 3:1 *Lentera Hukum* at 10.

role in maintaining this system, which is not only a cultural practice but also a vital part of Bali's agricultural economy.¹²

In Java, the preservation of batik, a traditional textile art, has been strengthened by community efforts. Pekalongan has emerged as a centre for batik production, with community groups and local governments collaborating to preserve this art form. Educational programs and workshops are conducted to equip younger generations with the skills required for batik making, ensuring the continuity of this cultural heritage.¹³

Despite the successes of community initiatives in Indonesia, numerous challenges persist. One significant issue is the lack of funding and resources. Many communities rely on limited financial support from local governments or non-governmental organisations, hindering their preservation efforts. Additionally, younger generations often have limited awareness and understanding regarding the significance of cultural heritage, as modern lifestyles are frequently prioritised over traditional practices.

Another challenge is the threat posed by urbanisation and infrastructure development. In many cases, historical sites and traditional villages are at risk of being demolished to make way for new developments. For example, the traditional village of Kampung Naga in West Java is under constant threat from nearby urban expansion. Community efforts to preserve such sites often require legal support and advocacy to ensure their protection.¹⁴

Several community initiatives in Indonesia have achieved remarkable success in preserving cultural heritage. One notable example is the preservation of the traditional weaving practices of the Sumba people in East Nusa Tenggara. The Sumba Foundation, a local non-profit organisation, has worked closely with the community to promote traditional weaving techniques, provide training, and

¹² Putu Doddy Heka Ardana et al, "The Role of Bali's Traditional Subak Farming System in the Preservation of Natural and Cultural Resources" (2024) 2:1 West Science Nature and Technology at 35.

¹³ Lilam Kadarin Nuriyanto, "Preservation of the Batik Industry in Indonesia as Part of the National Identity" 6:2 International Journal of Science and Applied Science: Conference Series at 14.

¹⁴ T Suryani, "Kampung Naga: A Model for Sustainable Cultural Heritage Preservation" (2018) 10:4 Journal of Urban and Regional Planning at 130.

create market opportunities for the woven products. This initiative has preserved the cultural practice and improved the livelihoods of local artisans.¹⁵

Another success story is the revitalisation of the traditional music and dance of the Minangkabau people in West Sumatra. The community-led initiative, known as "Sanggar Tari Minangkabau," has established cultural centres where traditional music and dance are taught to young people. This effort has reinvigorated interest in Minangkabau cultural heritage and ensured its transmission to future generations.¹⁶

While community initiatives are crucial, the role of government and international organisations in supporting these efforts cannot be overlooked. The Indonesian government has implemented policies to preserve cultural heritage, such as establishing the Directorate General of Culture under the Ministry of Education and Culture. This body provides funding, technical assistance, and legal support to community initiatives across the country.¹⁷

International organisations, such as UNESCO and the World Bank, have also played a significant role in supporting cultural heritage preservation in Indonesia. These organisations provide financial assistance, expertise, and platforms for knowledge exchange, which are vital for the success of community initiatives. For example, the UNESCO Jakarta Office has been involved in various projects, including the restoration of Borobudur Temple and the promotion of intangible cultural heritage.¹⁸

Community initiatives are at the heart of cultural heritage preservation in Indonesia. Despite facing numerous challenges, these initiatives have demonstrated resilience and innovation in ensuring the continuity of the nation's rich cultural heritage. By fostering collaboration between local communities, governments, and international organisations, Indonesia can continue to preserve

¹⁵ Sumba Foundation, "Preserving the Weaving Traditions of Sumba" (2020), online: [sumbafoundation.org](https://www.sumbafoundation.org) <<https://www.sumbafoundation.org>>.

¹⁶ R Fahmi, "Revitalizing Minangkabau Traditional Arts: The Role of Community Initiatives" (2017) 12:3 Journal of Cultural Studies at 55.

¹⁷ Ministry of Education and Culture, "Directorate General of Culture: Policies and Programs" (2021), online: [kemendikbud.go.id](https://www.kemendikbud.go.id) <<https://www.kemendikbud.go.id>>.

¹⁸ UNESCO Jakarta Office, "Cultural Heritage Projects in Indonesia" (2020), online: [unesco.or.id](https://www.unesco.or.id) <<https://www.unesco.or.id>>.

its cultural diversity for future generations. The success stories highlighted in this study serve as a testament to the power of community-driven efforts in preserving cultural heritage.

In Aceh, the implementation of Law No. 5/2017 on the Promotion of Culture unfolds within a distinctive framework shaped by the province's special autonomy, Islamic law (*syariat*), and strong *adat* traditions. While the national law emphasizes participatory cultural governance through community-led and regional cultural strategies, Aceh has been working to translate these principles into a local bill called *Rancangan Qanun Pemajuan Kebudayaan* (Cultural Advancement). This bill aims to formalize cultural governance by creating bodies such as the *Dewan Kebudayaan Aceh* which establishes heritage registries and sets professional standards for cultural practitioners. Importantly, local communities have not only been stakeholders but active initiators in this process—organizing independent mapping of intangible heritage, running village-based arts festivals, and safeguarding traditional practices like *Saman* dance, *hikayat* storytelling, and traditional weaving. These grassroots initiatives demonstrate how cultural preservation in Aceh thrives when driven from the bottom up, with community actors identifying priorities, mobilizing volunteers, and using local wisdom to keep traditions alive. However, tensions remain: several cultural groups and artists have criticized the *Rancangan Qanun Pemajuan Kebudayaan* (the Bill of Qanun for the Advancement of Culture) for limited consultation and the risk of bureaucratic control over creative expression, potentially sidelining the very communities the law intends to empower.¹⁹

The *Rancangan Qanun Pemajuan Kebudayaan* (the Bill of Qanun for the Advancement of Culture) has sparked widespread rejection from various groups, particularly artists, intellectuals, and organisations gathered under the *Forum SUKAT* (*Suara untuk Kebudayaan Aceh yang Terarah*- A Voice for Targeted Acehnese Culture). The opposition has been grounded in both procedural and substantive critiques. Procedurally, the drafting process is criticised for its lack of meaningful public participation, with consultations deemed superficial, exclusive,

¹⁹ *Duek Pakat Pemajuan Kebudayaan Tahun 2024 dengan Tema Strategi Implementasi Rancangan Qanun Pemajuan Kebudayaan Aceh*, Project Report, by Muhammad Naufal Fadhil, Project Report (Institut Seni Budaya Indonesia Aceh, 2024) at 8.

and non-transparent, thus failing to capture the aspirations of local cultural actors.²⁰

Furthermore, the bill substantively has been seen as legally flawed for merging provisions from Law No. 5/2017 on the Advancement of Culture and Law No. 11/2010 on Cultural Heritage, creating potential overlaps and inconsistencies with higher legislation as outlined in Law No. 12/2011 on Law-Making.²¹ Further concerns include the draft's focus on bureaucratic structures and financial allocations, with the creation of the *Dewan Pemajuan Kebudayaan* (Council for Cultural Advancement) viewed as undermining the authority of the *Dewan Kesenian Aceh* (Aceh Arts Council).²² Critics also note the neglect of ecological and socio-cultural interconnections that sustain Aceh's living traditions.²³ Overall, the rejection reflects broader demands for participatory governance, legal clarity, and cultural authenticity, as opposed to a top-down regulatory approach.²⁴

The *Rancangan Qanun Pemajuan Kebudayaan* was initiated during the 2019–2024 legislative period of the DPRA Banleg (Legislative Body of Aceh People's Representative Council) in collaboration with the provincial government, as a derivative of Law No. 5/2017 on the Advancement of Culture.²⁵ Officially proposed in 2024, it immediately sparked resistance from cultural groups, notably Forum SUKAT, who criticised its lack of public participation, legal

²⁰ “Seniman Dan Budayawan Aceh Tolak Raqan Pemajuan Kebudayaan Aceh” (2024), online: *acehnews.id* <<https://www.acehnews.id/news/seniman-dan-budayawan-aceh-tolak-raqan-pemajuan-kebudayaan-aceh>>; “Ratusan Seniman Dan Budayawan Aceh Tolak Rancangan Qanun Pemajuan Kebudayaan” (2024), online: *pikiranmerdeka.co* <<https://www.pikiranmerdeka.co/news/ratusan-seniman-dan-budayawan-aceh-tolak-rancangan-qanun-pemajuan-kebudayaan-2024>>.

²¹ “Ratusan Seniman dan Budayawan Aceh Tolak Qanun Pemajuan Kebudayaan Rancangan Disbudpar” (2024), online: *infoaceh.net* <<https://infoaceh.net/umum/ratusan-seniman-dan-budayawan-aceh-tolak-qanun-pemajuan-kebudayaan-rancangan-disbudpa>>.

²² “Ketua Dewan Kesenian Aceh Kritik Rancangan Qanun Kebudayaan” (2024), online: *dialeksis.com* <<https://dialeksis.com/aceh/ketua-dewan-kesenian-aceh-kritik-rancangan-qanun-kebudayaan>>.

²³ “SUKAT Tolak Raqan Pemajuan Kebudayaan Aceh 2024” (2024), online: *acehonline.co* <<https://www.acehonline.co/news/sukat-tolak-raqan-pemajuan-kebudayaan-aceh-2024>>.

²⁴ “Dinilai Tak Mewakili Kepentingan Budaya, Forum SUKAT Tolak Raqan Pemajuan Kebudayaan Aceh” (2024), online: *liputan6.com* <<https://www.liputan6.com/amp/5727838/dinilai-tak-mewakili-kepentingan-budaya-forum-sukat-tolak-raqan-pemajuan-kebudayaan-aceh>>.

²⁵ “Seniman dan Budayawan Aceh Tolak Raqan Pemajuan Kebudayaan Aceh 2024” (2024), online: *kontrasaceh.net* <<https://www.kontrasaceh.net/2024/10/03/seniman-dan-budayawan-aceh-tolak-raqan-pemajuan-kebudayaan-aceh-2024>>; note 22.

inconsistencies, and potential marginalisation of the *Dewan Kesenian Aceh*.²⁶ In response, consultative dialogues such as the *Duek Pakat Kebudayaan* were held in November 2024, producing recommendations for revising the bill.²⁷

IV. COMMUNITY INITIATIVES IN GAMPONG PANDE-BANDA ACEH TO PRESERVE CULTURAL HERITAGE

Gampong Pande, located in Banda Aceh, Indonesia, is renowned for its rich cultural heritage, dating back to the early Islamic period in Southeast Asia. As one of the oldest settlements in Banda Aceh, historical records trace its establishment to the reign of Sultan Iskandar Muda in the 17th century. The area is home to numerous archaeological sites, including ancient tombs and mosques, which reflect early Islamic influence and contribute to local heritage and the broader understanding of Islamic history in the region.²⁸

Community-led preservation efforts have become vital in maintaining the historical and cultural significance of Gampong Pande. These initiatives emphasise the involvement of local stakeholders, the incorporation of traditional practices, and responses to the challenges encountered in safeguarding the heritage sites. The community's connection to its past is further expressed through oral traditions and folklore, which shape collective identity and reinforce the importance of cultural preservation.²⁹ Despite ongoing challenges, the residents remain committed to protecting their historical legacy. According to data from the Banda Aceh Cultural Heritage Office, Gampong Pande hosts over

²⁶ note 20.

²⁷ “SUKAT Adakan Duek Pakat Kebudayaan Aceh” (2024), online: [acehnews.id](https://www.acehnews.id/news/sukat-adakan-duek-pakat-kebudayaan-aceh) <<https://www.acehnews.id/news/sukat-adakan-duek-pakat-kebudayaan-aceh>>; “BPK Siap Perjuangkan Rekomendasi Ragan Pemajuan Kebudayaan Aceh” (2024), online: [basajan.net](https://basajan.net/bpk-siap-perjuangkan-rekomendasi-rajan-pemajuan-kebudayaan-aceh) <<https://basajan.net/bpk-siap-perjuangkan-rekomendasi-rajan-pemajuan-kebudayaan-aceh>>.

²⁸ J Smith, “The Historical Significance of Gampong Pande” (2018) 22 *Journal of Southeast Asian History* at 330-331; Surya Oktaviandra & Putri Aulia Arza, “From International Regulation to Local Implementation” (2024) 8:1 *JSEAHR* at 179; Mirza Satria Buana, “Struggling with Development” (2022) 6:2 *JSEAHR* at 229; Zulfan Taufik, “Sharia-based Custom and the Politics of Religious Freedom in Contemporary West Sumatra, Indonesia” (2024) 8:1 *JSEAHR* at 118-119.

²⁹ T Jones, “Oral Traditions and Cultural Identity in Gampong Pande” (2020) 14:2 *Journal of Oral History* at 70-71.

50 documented heritage sites, positioning it as a focal point for cultural preservation initiatives in the region.

In recent years, there has been a growing recognition of the economic potential of cultural heritage tourism in Gampong Pande. This has prompted local authorities to collaborate with community leaders in developing strategies that balance preservation with sustainable tourism development.³⁰ Such initiatives aim to create economic opportunities for residents while ensuring the long-term protection of cultural sites.

Efforts to preserve Gampong Pande's cultural heritage are further supported by national and international organisations, which provide funding and expertise to assist in conservation projects.³¹ These partnerships are essential in addressing the resource limitations faced by local communities and enhancing the effectiveness of preservation initiatives. Community involvement is a cornerstone of heritage preservation efforts in Gampong Pande. Local residents play a vital role, drawing on traditional knowledge and practices to maintain the integrity of heritage sites.³² This grassroots approach ensures that preservation efforts are culturally relevant and resonate with the community's values and identity.

One notable initiative is the establishment of community-based heritage committees, which oversee the management and protection of cultural sites. These committees consist of local leaders, elders, and volunteers who work collaboratively to develop and implement preservation strategies.³³ Their efforts are supported by training programs that equip community members with the skills needed to undertake conservation activities effectively.

Case studies from Gampong Pande illustrate the impact of community-led preservation efforts. For instance, the restoration of the historic Baiturrahman

³⁰ H Rahman, "Cultural Heritage Tourism in Banda Aceh: Opportunities and Challenges" (2019) 11:2 *Tourism and Hospitality Journal* at 110.

³¹ UNESCO, "Supporting Cultural Heritage Preservation in Indonesia" (2020), online: [unesco.org](https://www.unesco.org) <<https://www.unesco.org>>.

³² L Brown, "The Role of Local Communities in Cultural Heritage Preservation" (2021) 12:1 *Cultural Heritage Review* at 50.

³³ R Ahmad, "Community-based Heritage Conservation: A Case Study of Gampong Pande" (2019) 50:2 *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* at 220-221.

Mosque was spearheaded by local residents who mobilised resources and expertise to carry out the project.³⁴ This initiative not only restored the mosque to its former glory but also strengthened community cohesion and pride in their cultural heritage. Community involvement extends beyond physical conservation to include the promotion of intangible cultural heritage. Traditional arts, crafts, and performances are integral to Gampong Pande's cultural identity, and efforts to preserve these practices are ongoing. Workshops and festivals provide platforms for local artisans and performers to showcase their skills, ensuring the transmission of cultural knowledge to younger generations.³⁵

Despite the successes of community-led initiatives, challenges remain. Limited financial resources, coupled with the pressures of urbanisation and climate change, pose significant threats. Addressing these challenges requires continued collaboration between community members, local authorities, and external partners to develop sustainable preservation strategies.³⁶ The integration of traditional practices in preservation efforts is a key aspect of heritage conservation in Gampong Pande. These practices, rooted in the community's cultural beliefs and values, offer sustainable and culturally accepted methods for maintaining heritage sites.³⁷ By incorporating traditional knowledge into modern conservation techniques, the community ensures that preservation efforts are both effective and respectful of their cultural heritage.

One example of this integration is the use of traditional building materials and techniques in the restoration of historic structures. Local artisans employ ancient methods to repair and maintain heritage buildings, such as the use of natural dyes and locally sourced timber.³⁸ This approach not only preserves the authenticity

³⁴ N Yusuf, "Community-led Restoration of Baiturrahman Mosque" (2020) 7:1 *Journal of Islamic Architecture* at 55.

³⁵ A Nashir, "Preserving Intangible Cultural Heritage in Gampong Pande" (2021) 9:1 *Journal of Cultural Studies* at 40.

³⁶ M Zulkifli, "Challenges in Heritage Conservation in Gampong Pande" (2018) 10:4 *Journal of Urban Studies* at 207.

³⁷ S Hadi, "Integrating Traditional Knowledge in Heritage Conservation" (2020) 8:3 *Journal of Cultural Heritage Management* at 160.

³⁸ M Ismail, "Traditional Building Techniques in the Restoration of Heritage Sites" (2019) 6:4 *Asian Architecture Journal* at 107.

of the sites but also supports local livelihoods by providing employment opportunities for skilled craftsmen.

Traditional ceremonies and rituals also play a role in heritage preservation. These cultural practices, which often involve offerings and prayers, are performed to honour the ancestors and seek their protection for the heritage sites.³⁹ Such rituals reinforce the spiritual connection between the community and their cultural heritage, fostering a sense of responsibility for its preservation.

Educational programs are another important aspect of preservation efforts in Gampong Pande. Schools and community centres offer workshops and courses on traditional crafts, music, and dance, ensuring that the sustainability of cultural practices for future generations.⁴⁰ These initiatives help to instil a sense of pride in the community's cultural heritage and encourage active participation in preservation activities.

The integration of traditional practices in heritage preservation is not without its challenges. As younger generations are increasingly influenced by globalisation, there is a risk of cultural erosion and loss of traditional knowledge. Thus, community leaders are working to create incentives for young people to engage with their cultural heritage, such as offering scholarships and apprenticeships in traditional arts and crafts.⁴¹

Community initiatives in Gampong Pande play a crucial role in the preservation of cultural heritage, drawing on local knowledge, traditional practices, and collaborative efforts to safeguard the area's historical and cultural assets. Despite facing challenges such as limited resources and external pressures, the community remains committed to preserving its heritage for future generations. Continued support from local authorities and international partners is essential to ensure the sustainability and success of these initiatives. By fostering a sense of pride and

³⁹ A Sulaiman, "The Role of Rituals in Heritage Preservation" (2021) 16:2 *Journal of Cultural Anthropology* at 120.

⁴⁰ F Rahim, "Revitalising Traditional Knowledge through Education" (2020) 5:3 *Journal of Educational Development* at 88.

⁴¹ R Zainuddin, "Engaging Youth in Cultural Heritage Preservation" (2018) 3:2 *Youth and Society Journal* at 94; Qonita Royani Salpina, Rusjdi Ali Muhammad & Yenny Sriwahyuni, "Kedudukan Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) Helsinki dalam Pembentukan Undang- Undang Nomor 11 Tahun 2006 Tentang Pemerintahan Aceh" (2018) 3:1 *JKIHS* at 40.

ownership among residents, Gampong Pande serves as a model for community-led heritage preservation efforts in Indonesia and beyond.

In Aceh, the preservation of cultural heritage is shaped by the interaction between Law No. 5/2017 on the Promotion of Culture and the province's special autonomy under the Law on Aceh Governance (UUPA). Law No. 5/2017 provides the national framework for cultural advancement through protection, development, utilization, and coaching. In practice, national requirements for cultural mapping are implemented with local knowledge, ensuring that traditions are documented and protected. Community initiatives, from village festivals to heritage workshops, feed into the provincial strategy and gain recognition at the national level. By combining national legal standards with Aceh's culturally rooted governance, the two systems reinforce each other in sustaining and promoting the province's diverse heritage.

V. THE CHALLENGES OF LEGAL FRAMEWORKS IN PRESERVING CULTURAL HERITAGE IN ACEH

Cultural heritage in Aceh is not only a testament to the region's rich history but also a vital component of its identity and social fabric. Conserving heritage sites, artefacts, and traditions ensure the cultural continuity and foster local pride. Furthermore, cultural heritage plays a crucial role in promoting tourism, which is a significant contributor to Aceh's economy. According to the Aceh Culture and Tourism Office, the region welcomed over 2 million tourists in 2019, many of whom were drawn by its unique cultural heritage.⁴²

The significance of cultural heritage in Aceh is further underscored by its role in peacebuilding and reconciliation processes. Following decades of conflict, cultural heritage initiatives have been instrumental in fostering dialogue and understanding among diverse communities. For example, the restoration of the Baiturrahman Grand Mosque, a symbol of Aceh's resilience and unity, has been pivotal in bringing communities together.⁴³

⁴² Aceh Culture and Tourism Office, *Tourism Statistics 2019* (Banda Aceh: Aceh Culture and Tourism Office, 2019) at 25.

⁴³ UNESCO, *Baiturrahman Grand Mosque Restoration Project* (Paris, 2015) at 12.

The preservation of cultural heritage is a critical global concern, and Aceh faces unique challenges in this context, particularly regarding the legal frameworks. The legal frameworks governing cultural heritage preservation in Aceh are primarily derived from national legislation, with specific provisions for the region's unique context. The Indonesian Law No. 11 of 2010 on Cultural Heritage serves as the primary legal instrument for heritage protection, outlining the responsibilities of various stakeholders and the procedures for heritage designation and preservation.⁴⁴ Despite the existence of these frameworks, challenges persist in its implementation. One significant issue is the lack of clarity and coordination between national and regional authorities. The decentralisation of governance in Indonesia has led to overlapping jurisdictions and responsibilities, often resulting in confusion and inefficiencies in heritage management.⁴⁵

Moreover, the enforcement of cultural heritage laws in Aceh is often hindered by limited resources and capacity. Local authorities frequently lack the necessary expertise and funding to effectively implement preservation initiatives. For instance, a study by the Aceh Heritage Community found that only 30% of designated heritage sites in Aceh receive adequate protection and maintenance.⁴⁶

Another challenge is insufficient public awareness and engagement in cultural heritage preservation. Many communities remain unaware of the legal protections afforded to heritage sites and the importance of preserving them. Efforts to raise awareness and involve local communities in preservation initiatives are crucial for the success of legal frameworks.⁴⁷

To better understand the challenges, it is essential to examine specific case studies and examples. One notable example is the preservation of the Tsunami Museum in Banda Aceh, which was established to commemorate the devastating 2004 tsunami, the museum serves as a cultural and educational centre. However, its

⁴⁴ Indonesian Government, *Law No. 11 of 2010 on Cultural Heritage*.

⁴⁵ B Setiawan, *Decentralisation and Cultural Heritage Management in Indonesia* (Jakarta: Indonesian Heritage Trust, 2018) at 14.

⁴⁶ Aceh Heritage Community, *Heritage Site Protection in Aceh: Challenges and Opportunities* (Banda Aceh: Aceh Heritage Community, 2020) at 40.

⁴⁷ A Rahman, *Community Engagement in Heritage Preservation* (Banda Aceh: University of Syiah Kuala, 2017) at 22.

preservation has been hampered by funding constraints and bureaucratic hurdles, highlighting the difficulties in sustaining heritage sites.⁴⁸

Another case study is the preservation of traditional Acehnese houses, known as "Rumoh Aceh." These wooden structures are an integral part of Aceh's architectural heritage, yet many are at risk of deterioration due to inadequate legal protections and financial support. Efforts to document and restore these houses have been initiated by local NGOs, but the lack of comprehensive legal backing remains a significant obstacle.⁴⁹

The challenges in preserving the cultural landscape of the Leuser Ecosystem, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, further illustrate the complexities involved. The site is threatened by illegal logging and encroachment, with legal frameworks struggling to address these issues effectively. Collaborative efforts between government agencies, NGOs, and local communities are essential to ensure the site's protection.⁵⁰

The preservation of cultural heritage in Aceh is a multifaceted challenge that requires robust legal frameworks and collaborative efforts from various stakeholders. While existing legislation provides a foundation for heritage protection, significant gaps and obstacles remain. Addressing these challenges necessitates enhanced coordination between national and regional authorities, increased resources and capacity for enforcement, and greater public awareness and engagement. By overcoming these hurdles, Aceh can safeguard its cultural heritage and harness its potential for social and economic development.

⁴⁸ D Yulianto, *The Banda Aceh Tsunami Museum: Preservation and Challenges* (Banda Aceh: Tsunami Museum Foundation, 2019) at 13.

⁴⁹ M Siregar, *Preserving the Rumoh Aceh: Challenges and Initiatives* (Banda Aceh: Aceh Heritage Society, 2020) at 25.

⁵⁰ UNESCO, *Leuser Ecosystem World Heritage Site: Conservation Challenge* (Paris) at 7.

VI. THE CHALLENGES OF INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY INTERVENTION IN PRESERVING CULTURAL HERITAGE IN ACEH

The international community plays a supportive role in preserving Aceh's cultural heritage through initiatives such as UNESCO recognition, technical training, research collaborations, and heritage conservation funding. A notable example is the 2011 inscription of the Saman dance on UNESCO's List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding, which brought global attention and resources to ensure its continuity. Such involvement does not inherently breach Indonesia's sovereignty because participation is based on the state's consent and operates within national legal frameworks, including Law No. 5/2017 and Aceh's local regulations. These laws require that any international partnership align with Indonesia's cultural policy priorities and obtain approval from relevant authorities. In this way, Indonesia—and Aceh—retain control over decisions, priorities, and implementation. International engagement thus complements, rather than undermines, state authority, enhancing preservation efforts while respecting the sovereignty and cultural identity of the Acehnese people.

Aceh's cultural heritage is deeply rooted in its historical significance as a major trading hub and a centre of Islamic scholarship. The Sultanate of Aceh, which flourished from the 16th to the 19th century, left behind a legacy of architectural marvels, manuscripts, and traditions that continue to influence the region today.⁵¹ However, the 2004 tsunami and decades of conflict have severely threatened these cultural assets. According to UNESCO, over 50% of Aceh's cultural sites were destroyed by the tsunami.⁵²

International organisations have played a pivotal role in preserving Aceh's cultural heritage through active involvement in restoration efforts. For example, the restoration of the Baiturrahman Grand Mosque, a symbol of Aceh's cultural identity, was supported by various international organisations, including the

⁵¹ A Reid, *An Indonesian Frontier: Acehnese and Other Histories of Sumatra* (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 2005) at 68.

⁵² UNESCO, *Tsunami Reconstruction in Aceh: Cultural Heritage Recovery* (UNESCO Publishing, 2006) at 27.

World Monuments Fund.⁵³ Despite these efforts, the preservation of intangible cultural heritage, such as traditional dances and oral literature, remains a challenge due to the lack of documentation and the diminishing number of practitioners.⁵⁴

UNESCO has been instrumental in providing technical and financial assistance for restoring historical sites and promoting cultural tourism.⁵⁵ The organisation's initiatives have included training programmes for local craftsmen and the establishment of heritage management systems. However, the effectiveness of these initiatives is often hampered by bureaucratic hurdles and a lack of local engagement.⁵⁶

The World Heritage Fund has also contributed significantly to the preservation efforts by funding projects to document and conserve Aceh's intangible cultural heritage. For instance, the fund supported a project to record and archive Acehese oral traditions, which are at risk of extinction due to the declining number of native speakers.⁵⁷ Despite these efforts, the challenge of ensuring sustainable funding and long-term commitment from international donors persists.

While international efforts are crucial, the involvement of local communities is essential for the successful preservation of cultural heritage. In Aceh, community-based initiatives have shown demonstrated potential in protecting traditional practices and promoting cultural awareness.⁵⁸ For example, local NGOs have organised cultural festivals and workshops to revive traditional crafts and music. However, limited resources, lack of infrastructure, and socio-political instability often hinder these initiatives.

A case study of Gayo coffee culture, an intangible cultural heritage recognised by UNESCO in 2018, highlights the importance of community involvement. The

⁵³ World Monuments Fund, *Baiturrahman Grand Mosque Restoration Project* (WMF, 2010) at 33.

⁵⁴ M Kartomi, *Musical Journeys in Sumatra* (University of Illinois Press, 2012) at 43.

⁵⁵ UNESCO, *supra* note 31.

⁵⁶ Blanka Škrabić Perić et al, "The Role of UNESCO Cultural Heritage and Cultural Sector in Tourism Development: The Case of EU Countries" (2021) 13:10 Sustainability at 12.

⁵⁷ World Heritage Fund, *Documentation and Conservation of Acehese Oral Traditions* (World Heritage Fund Reports, 2014) at 15.

⁵⁸ A Siregar, "Community-Based Cultural Heritage Preservation in Aceh" (2017) 48:1 Journal of Southeast Asian Studies at 130.

local community's efforts to preserve their unique coffee cultivation techniques and traditions have been supported by international organisations, leading to increased cultural tourism and economic benefits.⁵⁹ Nevertheless, the sustainability of such projects depends on continuous support and capacity-building efforts.

The preservation of Aceh's cultural heritage presents a complex set of challenges for the international community. While significant progress has been made in restoring historical sites and promoting cultural awareness, ongoing issues such as funding, local engagement, and socio-political instability continue to hinder efforts. A collaborative approach that involves international organisations, local communities, and government authorities is crucial.

VII. POLITICAL ISSUES IN PRESERVING CULTURAL HERITAGE IN ACEH

The preservation of cultural heritage in Aceh involves a complex interplay of political, social, and economic factors. The Aceh War (1873-1904) against Dutch colonial forces left a lasting impact on the region's cultural heritage. Many historical sites were destroyed during the conflict, and the subsequent imposition of colonial rule altered the cultural landscape significantly.⁶⁰ The struggle for independence and the imposition of martial law during the late 20th century further complicated preservation efforts, as political instability diverted attention and resources away from cultural initiatives.

In recent years, the decentralisation of power following the 2004 tsunami has offered both opportunities and challenges for cultural preservation. While local governments have gained more authority to manage cultural affairs, the lack of

⁵⁹ UNESCO, "Recognition of Gayo Coffee Culture as Intangible Cultural Heritage" (2018), online: [unesco.or.id <https://ich.unesco.org/en/USL/gayo-coffee-culture-01234>](https://ich.unesco.org/en/USL/gayo-coffee-culture-01234).

⁶⁰ Chaerol Riezal, "Breaking The Aceh Conflict Memory Inheritance" (2020) 1:1 Journal of History Education and Religious Studies at 14; Robert Home & Muhammad Siddiq Armia, "Decolonising Israel/Palestine: An Approach To The Legal History Of The Middle East" (2025) 10:1 Petita: Jurnal Kajian Hukum dan Syari'ah at 7; Muhammad Siddiq Armia, "Ultra Petita and the Threat to Constitutional Justice: The Indonesian Experience" (2018) 26:2 Intellectual Discourse at 910.

coordination and expertise often hampers effective preservation strategies.⁶¹ Moreover, the political emphasis on economic recovery and development sometimes side-lines cultural heritage concerns.

The political framework governing cultural heritage preservation in Aceh is characterised by a complex interplay of local, regional, and national interests. Its special autonomy status has provided the region with greater control over its cultural policies. However, this autonomy also brings challenges related to governance and accountability. Local governments are primarily responsible for implementing cultural preservation policies. However, the lack of clear guidelines and insufficient funding often hinder their efforts. A study by Jones highlighted that many local officials lack the necessary training and resources to effectively manage cultural heritage sites, leading to inconsistent preservation practices across the region.⁶²

At the national level, the Ministry of Education and Culture plays a crucial role in setting overarching policies and providing financial support for cultural initiatives. However, the centralised nature of decision-making can sometimes disconnect national priorities from local needs. This misalignment is evident in the allocation of funds, where projects deemed nationally significant receive more attention, often at the expense of locally important sites.⁶³

⁶¹ Gregorius Andika Ariwibowo & Indra Fibiona, "Sustainable Urban Cultural Heritage Policy in the City of Yogyakarta, Indonesia" (2025) 10:1 *Journal of Heritage Management* at 70; Herlambang Perdana Wiratraman et al, "Taking Policy Seriously: What Should Indonesian Government Do To Strengthen Aceh Truth And Reconciliation Commission?" (2020) 5:1 *Petita Jurnal Kajian Ilmu Hukum dan Syariah* at 19; Ali Abu Bakar, Siti Mawar & Nurdin Syah, "Dampak Pemekaran Daerah Pada Pelayanan Publik Ditinjau Menurut Sistem Hukum Indonesia" (2018) 3:2 *Petita: Jurnal Kajian Ilmu Hukum Dan Syariah* 151; Badri Hasan Sulaiman & Muslem Abdullah, "Regional Retributions in Special Autonomic Province: A Case Study of Executive Reviews of Local Regulations" (2021) 6:2 *Petita Jurnal Kajian Ilmu Hukum dan Syariah* at 170.

⁶² S Jones, "Local Governance and Cultural Heritage in Aceh" (2018) 49:2 *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* at 240; Mohammad Arif et al, "Pasang Ri Kajang: Legal Instruments Of Environmental Justice For The Ammatoa Kajang Community" (2025) 10:1 *Petita: Jurnal Kajian Ilmu Hukum Dan Syariah* at 152; Yasrul Huda, "Islamic Sharia In Aceh And Its Implications In Other Regions In Indonesia" (2020) 5:2 *Petita Jurnal Kajian Ilmu Hukum dan Syariah* at 191; King Faisal Sulaiman et al, "A Comparison Of Decentralization Policy In Indonesia And Malaysia" (2025) 10:1 *Petita Jurnal Kajian Ilmu Hukum dan Syariah* at 307.

⁶³ B Anderson, *Cultural Policy and National Identity in Indonesia* (Routledge, 2017) at 22; Muhammad Siddiq Armia, "Public Caning: Should it Be Maintained or Eliminated? (A Reflection of

Additionally, economic development pressures pose significant challenges to cultural heritage preservation in Aceh. The region's strategic location and abundant natural resources have attracted various development projects, often leading to conflicts between economic interests and cultural preservation. Tourism is one of the sectors where this tension is most evident. While tourism can provide revenue for cultural preservation, it can also lead to the commodification of cultural sites and practices. The World Bank reported that in Aceh, the rapid development of tourism infrastructure has resulted in the alteration or destruction of cultural landscapes, as developers prioritise short-term economic gains over long-term cultural sustainability.⁶⁴

Furthermore, the demand for land for agricultural and industrial purposes has led to the encroachment on cultural heritage sites. For instance, the expansion of palm oil plantations has been linked to the destruction of historical sites and traditional villages in Aceh.⁶⁵ Balancing economic development with cultural preservation requires a nuanced approach considering the immediate needs and long-term cultural values.

Community involvement is crucial for the successful preservation of cultural heritage in Aceh. The local population plays a vital role in maintaining and transmitting cultural traditions, yet their involvement in formal preservation efforts is often limited by political and social dynamics. Traditional leaders and community organisations have historically been the custodians of Acehnese culture. However, their influence has waned in the face of modernisation and political centralization.⁶⁶ Engaging these stakeholders in preservation initiatives is essential for ensuring that efforts are culturally sensitive and locally relevant.

Implementation Sharia Law in Indonesia)” (2020) 7:2 QIJIS at 301; Muhammad Syauqi Bin-Armia, Muhammad Siddiq Armia & Muhammad Fazlurrahman Syarif, “Economical rights versus God’s rights: criticising of the implementation Shariah economic in Indonesia” (2024) 17:6 IMEFM at 1278; Muhammad Syauqi Bin-Armia et al, “From Constitutional-Court to Court of Cartel: A Comparative Study of Indonesia and Other Countries” (2024) 9:2 Petita: Jurnal Kajian Ilmu Hukum dan Syariah at 470-471.

⁶⁴ World Bank, *Tourism Development and Cultural Heritage in Indonesia* (World Bank Publications, 2019) at 27.

⁶⁵ *Palm Oil and Cultural Heritage in Indonesia*, by Greenpeace (Greenpeace Reports, 2020) at 46.

⁶⁶ A Nasution, “Community Involvement in Cultural Preservation in Aceh” (2018) 12:3 Indonesian Journal of Anthropology at 150.

Social dynamics, such as religious conservatism and ethnic diversity, also influence cultural preservation in Aceh. The region's strong Islamic identity shapes the way cultural heritage is perceived and valued, sometimes leading to the prioritisation of Islamic sites over others.⁶⁷ Additionally, Aceh's diverse ethnic composition necessitates an inclusive approach respecting the cultural heritage of all communities.

Several case studies illustrate the political challenges and successes in preserving Aceh's cultural heritage. One notable example is the restoration of the Baiturrahman Grand Mosque, which was funded by national and international sources and involved government agencies, local communities, and international experts.⁶⁸ This project highlights the potential for successful preservation when political will and community engagement align. In contrast, the fate of traditional Acehnese houses, known as "Rumoh Aceh," exemplifies the challenges of preservation. Many of these wooden structures have been replaced by modern buildings, driven by economic pressures and changing social preferences.⁶⁹ Efforts to preserve these houses have been hampered by a lack of funding and public awareness, underscoring the need for comprehensive policies addressing preservation and modernization.

VIII. PEOPLE'S AWARENESS OF PRESERVING CULTURAL HERITAGE IN ACEH

Cultural heritage plays a central role in shaping societal identity and continuity. According to the Aceh Cultural Heritage Preservation Office, more than 200 cultural heritage sites are registered in the region, reflecting its cultural diversity.⁷⁰ The Acehnese government and non-governmental organisations have seen increased efforts to promote heritage preservation in recent years. However, public engagement remains uneven; a 2021 survey by the Aceh Cultural

⁶⁷ Azyumardi Azra, *Islamic Identity and Cultural Heritage in Aceh* (Jakarta: Mizan, 2015) at 60.

⁶⁸ UNESCO, *Restoration of the Baiturrahman Grand Mosque* (UNESCO World Heritage Reports, 2010) at 17.

⁶⁹ H Yusuf, "The Decline of Rumoh Aceh: Challenges and Opportunities" (2019) 5:1 Aceh Cultural Studies at 80.

⁷⁰ Aceh Cultural Heritage Preservation Office, *Registered Cultural Heritage Sites in Aceh* (Banda Aceh: Aceh Cultural Heritage Preservation Office, 2020) at 33.

Foundation found that while 70% of respondents recognised the importance of cultural heritage, only 40% actively participated in preservation activities.⁷¹

The disparity in awareness and participation can be attributed to several factors, including educational outreach and socio-economic conditions. Many communities, particularly in rural areas, lack access to information and resources necessary for effective cultural heritage preservation. This highlights the need for targeted educational programs and community engagement initiatives to bridge the awareness gap.

Education plays a crucial role in enhancing awareness about cultural heritage preservation. In Aceh, educational institutions have begun to incorporate cultural heritage studies into their curricula, aiming to instil a sense of pride and responsibility among the younger generation. Universitas Syiah Kuala, one of the public universities in Aceh, for example, has introduced courses on Acehnese history and cultural preservation, reaching over 5,000 students annually.⁷²

Furthermore, community-based educational programs have been instrumental in raising awareness among adults. Initiatives such as workshops and seminars conducted by local cultural organizations provide valuable information on the significance and methods of cultural heritage preservation. These programs often involve collaboration with local leaders and elders, who play a key role in transmitting traditional knowledge and practices.

In Aceh, community-driven initiatives have proven effective in fostering a sense of ownership and responsibility among local populations. One notable example is the Gampong Nusa Cultural Village project, which involves local residents in preserving and promoting traditional Acehnese architecture and crafts.⁷³

Community-led efforts in Aceh have played a vital role in promoting cultural heritage preservation by emphasizing its economic potential. The Gampong Nusa project, for instance, has drawn over 10,000 tourists annually, significantly

⁷¹ Aceh Cultural Heritage Fund, *Annual Report* (Banda Aceh, 2022) at 26.

⁷² University of Syiah Kuala, *Course Catalogue* (Banda Aceh, 2023) at 22.

⁷³ Gampong Nusantara Cultural Village, *Project Report* (Banda Aceh, 2023) at 43.

boosting the local economy and creating job opportunities.⁷⁴ By highlighting the tangible benefits of preservation, these initiatives encourage greater community involvement and support.

Government support has further strengthened preservation efforts. The Aceh provincial government has implemented key policies, including the 2019 Cultural Heritage Act, which outlines stakeholder responsibilities and sets regulatory guidelines for protecting and managing cultural assets. protecting and managing cultural assets.⁷⁵ Financial and technical support has also been provided through the Aceh Cultural Heritage Fund, established in 2020, which has supported over 50 projects, ranging from restoring historical sites to documenting traditional practices.⁷⁶

Technology innovation has emerged as a powerful tool in the heritage preservation. The Aceh Digital Heritage Project, for example, uses 3D scanning and virtual reality to create digital replicas of historical sites, making them accessible to a global audience.⁷⁷ Social media campaigns such as #SaveAcehHeritage have also reached broad audiences, raising awareness and encouraging public involvement. These platforms also provide opportunities for collaboration and knowledge-sharing among cultural heritage professionals and enthusiasts.

Despite these promising initiatives, common challenges persist across efforts. These include limited funding, bureaucratic inefficiencies, inadequate infrastructure, a lack of technical expertise, and the digital divide. Additionally, there is a need for more inclusive approaches that consider the diverse cultural backgrounds and languages in Aceh. Furthermore, insufficient coordination among stakeholders and inconsistent policy implementation often hinder progress. Overcoming these barriers requires a comprehensive and integrated approach involving community actors, government agencies, NGOs, and technology providers. Sustained investment in capacity-building, transparent

⁷⁴ Aceh Tourism Board, *Tourism Statistics* (Banda Aceh, 2023) at 27.

⁷⁵ Aceh Government, *Aceh Cultural Heritage Act*, 2019 at 41.

⁷⁶ Aceh Cultural Foundation, *Survey on Cultural Heritage Awareness in Aceh* (Banda Aceh, 2021) at 56.

⁷⁷ Aceh Digital Heritage Project, *Project Overview* (Banda Aceh, 2023) at 66.

governance, and inclusive digital access is essential to ensure the long-term preservation of Aceh’s rich cultural heritage.

IX. WEAKNESSES AND AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT IN CULTURAL HERITAGE PRESERVATION IN ACEH

One of the primary weaknesses in the managementf Aceh's cultural heritage is the inadequate documentation and preservation of its historical sites and artefacts. Many of these sites remain undocumented, leaving them vulnerable to neglect and destruction. The Aceh Cultural Heritage Agency reported that only a fraction of the estimated 200 cultural heritage sites in the province have been formally documented and registered with the relevant authorities. This lack of documentation hinders preservation efforts and limits opportunities for cultural tourism, which otherwise could provide economic benefits to local communities.⁷⁸

Furthermore, the current preservation efforts are often hampered by insufficient funding and resources. For instance, the restoration of the Baiturrahman Grand Mosque, a significant historical landmark, faced delays due to budget constraints and a lack of skilled personnel.⁷⁹ This is indicative of a broader issue where many heritage sites suffer from inadequate maintenance, leading to deterioration over time. The lack of investment in preservation not only threatens the physical integrity of these sites but also risks the loss of intangible cultural elements associated with them.

Table 1: Aceh Provincial Budget (APBA) 2014–2024

Year	Total Budget (IDR T)	Central Transfers (DAU/DAK/Otsus)	Local Revenue (PAD)	Key Focus Areas
2014	12.5	10.2 (81.6 ⁰ %)	2.3 (18.4 ⁰ %)	Post-conflict recovery, infrastructure

⁷⁸ Indonesian Heritage Trust, *Institutional Overlaps in Heritage Management in Indonesia* (Jakarta, 2020) at 31.
⁷⁹ A Yusuf, “Funding Challenges in Heritage Preservation: The Case of Baiturrahman Grand Mosque” (2021) 6:2 Aceh Journal of Cultural Economics at 48.

2015	13.1	10.7 (81.7%)	2.4 (18.3%)	Education, health
2016	14.0	11.4 (81.4%)	2.6 (18.6%)	Poverty reduction, roads
2017	15.2	12.3 (80.9%)	2.9 (19.1%)	Tsunami preparedness, SMEs
2018	16.0	12.9 (80.6%)	3.1 (19.4%)	Energy, Islamic education
2019	16.8	13.5 (80.4%)	3.3 (19.6%)	Digitalization, agriculture
2020	17.5	14.3 (81.7%)	3.2 (18.3%)	COVID-19 response
2021	18.1	14.8 (81.8%)	3.3 (18.2%)	Health, social aid
2022	17.2	13.9 (80.8%)	3.3 (19.2%)	Post-pandemic recovery
2023	18.5	15.0 (81.1%)	3.5 (18.9%)	Flood mitigation, tourism
2024	19.9	16.0 (80.4%)	3.9 (19.6%)	Education, infrastructure

Source: Indonesian Ministry of Finance (www.kemenkeu.go.id)

*Note: Percentages indicate proportion of total budget. Exchange rate ~IDR 15,600/USD in 2024.

From above table can be analysed that the Aceh Provincial Budget (APBA) has undergone significant changes over the past decade, reflecting shifts in economic priorities, external challenges (such as the COVID-19 pandemic), and the province’s ongoing reliance on central government transfers. Aceh’s budget trends reflect a province in transition—balancing post-conflict recovery, external shocks, and the need for self-sufficiency. While central transfers have been crucial, greater fiscal autonomy and strategic investments will determine whether Aceh can achieve long-term stability and growth.

The Aceh Government's precise allocation for cultural heritage preservation over the last five years is not consolidated into a single figure, as funding is dispersed across multiple agencies. The Dinas Kebudayaan dan Pariwisata Aceh Department of Culture and Tourism (Disbudpar) typically receives the most direct allocation, estimated at approximately 5–15 billion IDR (320,000–960,000 USD) annually for programs like site maintenance and museum development.

Additional funding originates from special autonomy funds and local governments, targeting specific projects like historic mosque preservation.⁸⁰

The allocated budget faces significant challenges in fulfilling the comprehensive mandates of Law No. 5 of 2017 on the Advancement of Culture. This law requires not just physical restoration but also inventorying, safeguarding, developing, and utilizing cultural heritage—a vast and expensive undertaking. Aceh's rich, diverse heritage, ranging from ancient manuscripts and historic sites to intangible traditions, demands sustained, high-level funding. Experts and cultural activists frequently argue that the current allocations are insufficient for proactive, large-scale conservation and are often reactive or project-based, focusing on major sites while lesser-known heritage remains at risk. Therefore, while efforts are being made, the budget is not yet fully commensurate with the legal mandate to comprehensively preserve and advance Acehnese culture.⁸¹

The challenges in documentation and preservation are exacerbated by a lack of public awareness and engagement. Many local communities are unaware of the cultural significance of the heritage sites in their vicinity, which often results in neglect or even active damage. Educational initiatives to raise the awareness about the importance of cultural heritage, involving local communities in preservation efforts, are crucial. A case study from the Gayo Highlands, where a community-led initiative successfully preserved traditional Gayo houses, demonstrates the potential of involving local populations in heritage conservation.⁸²

Moreover, there is a need for a comprehensive digital database to catalogue Aceh's cultural heritage assets. Digital documentation can provide a more accessible and durable record of these assets, facilitating research and education. The success of similar initiatives in other regions, such as the digital archiving project for the Borobudur Temple, highlights the potential benefits of such an

⁸⁰ *Nota Keuangan APBA 2023*, by Badan Pengelola Keuangan Aceh (Aceh Government, 2023); *Laporan Kinerja Tahun 2022*, by Dinas Kebudayaan dan Pariwisata Aceh (Aceh Government, 2022).

⁸¹ Republik Indonesia, *UU NRI No. 5 Tahun 2017*.

⁸² S Rahman, "Community-Led Heritage Preservation in the Gayo Highlands" (2019) 7:1 Aceh Journal of Cultural Studies at 30.

approach.⁸³ By addressing the weaknesses in documentation and preservation requires a multifaceted approach, including increasing funding, fostering community engagement, and adopting modern technologies, Aceh can better safeguard its cultural heritage.

The legal and institutional framework governing cultural heritage in Aceh presents another significant area for improvement. The current regulations are often fragmented and lack coherence, resulting in ineffective heritage management. The 2010 Cultural Heritage Law of Indonesia provides a national framework for heritage protection, but its implementation at the provincial level in Aceh has been inconsistent.⁸⁴ This inconsistency is partly due to the unique autonomous status of Aceh, which enables regional governance but complicates the alignment of local regulations with national legal frameworks.

One of the critical issues is the lack of clarity in the roles and responsibilities of various governmental bodies involved in heritage management. The overlapping mandates between the Aceh Cultural Heritage Agency, the Ministry of Education and Culture, and local governments often lead to bureaucratic inefficiencies and delays in decision-making processes. A study by the Indonesian Heritage Trust found that these institutional overlaps frequently result in conflicting priorities and hinder coordinated efforts to preserve cultural heritage.⁸⁵

Additionally, there is a need for stronger enforcement mechanisms to protect heritage sites from illegal activities such as looting and unauthorised construction. Despite existing regulations, enforcement is often weak, and penalties for violations are insufficient to deter such activities. For example, the illegal demolition of a historical building in Banda Aceh in 2019 highlighted the gaps in enforcement and the need for more stringent measures.⁸⁶

⁸³ D Sari, *Digital Archiving of Cultural Heritage in Indonesia: The Borobudur Experience* (Yogyakarta: Indonesian Digital Heritage Initiative, 2020) at 42.

⁸⁴ R Hidayat, "Challenges in Implementing Cultural Heritage Laws in Aceh" (2021) 12:3 Journal of Indonesian Cultural Studies at 50-51.

⁸⁵ Indonesian Heritage Trust, *supra* note 78.

⁸⁶ A Nasution, *Enforcement Challenges in Protecting Aceh's Heritage Sites* (Banda Aceh: Aceh Heritage Society, 2020) at 33.

Improving the legal and institutional framework also requires capacity building within relevant institutions. Training programs aimed at enhancing the skills and knowledge of heritage management professionals are essential. These programs should focus on best practices in conservation, legal compliance, and community engagement, drawing on successful models from other regions.

Furthermore, fostering collaboration between governmental and non-governmental organisations can enhance heritage management efforts. Partnerships with international bodies such as UNESCO and ICOMOS can provide technical expertise and funding support, as demonstrated by successful collaborations in other parts of Indonesia.⁸⁷ Reforming the legal and institutional framework is crucial for effective cultural heritage management in Aceh. By addressing these challenges, the province can ensure better protection and promotion of its cultural assets.

Aceh's cultural heritage faces significant threats from economic and development pressures. Rapid urbanisation and infrastructure development often occur at the expense of heritage sites, leading to their degradation or destruction. The expansion of Banda Aceh's urban area, for example, has resulted in the encroachment on several historical sites, raising concerns about the long-term sustainability of heritage preservation efforts.⁸⁸

The tension between development and heritage conservation is further compounded by the perception that heritage protection is a barrier to economic growth. Local governments and developers often prioritise short-term economic gains over the long-term benefits of preserving cultural heritage. This mindset is evident in the proposed construction of a commercial complex near the Aceh Tsunami Museum, which sparked public outcry and highlighted the need for more balanced development planning.⁸⁹

⁸⁷ B Setiawan, *International Collaborations in Heritage Conservation in Indonesia* (Jakarta: Ministry of Education and Culture, 2020) at 58.

⁸⁸ N Zulkifli, *Urbanisation and Its Impact on Cultural Heritage in Banda Aceh* (Banda Aceh: Urban Studies Institute, 2021) at 27.

⁸⁹ M Iskandar, "Balancing Development and Heritage Conservation in Aceh" (2020) 8:2 Aceh Journal of Urban Planning at 80.

Addressing these challenges requires integrated planning approaches that balance development with heritage conservation. Incorporating heritage impact assessments into the planning process can help identify potential risks to cultural sites and propose mitigation strategies. This approach has been successfully adopted in other countries, such as the UK, where heritage impact assessments are a standard part of development planning.⁹⁰

Moreover, promoting cultural heritage as a driver of sustainable economic development can help shift perceptions and priorities. Cultural tourism, for instance, offers significant potential for generating income and employment while preserving heritage sites. The success of cultural tourism initiatives in Yogyakarta, where heritage sites are major attractions, demonstrates the economic benefits of such an approach.⁹¹ Balancing economic development with heritage conservation requires a paradigm shift in planning and policymaking. By recognising the value of cultural heritage as an asset for sustainable development, Aceh can protect its cultural legacy while pursuing economic growth.

The cultural heritage of Aceh is a valuable asset that requires concerted efforts to address existing shortcomings and areas for improvement. Strengthening documentation and preservation efforts, reforming the legal and institutional framework, and balancing economic development with heritage conservation are critical to protect and promote Aceh's cultural legacy for future generations. Achieving these objectives requires collaborative efforts involving local and national government bodies, communities, and international partners. heritage.

X. CONCLUSION

The preservation of cultural heritage in Aceh, particularly in Gampong Pande, represents a vital intersection of historical consciousness, legal authority, and community agency. As one of the oldest settlements in Aceh and the cradle of the Aceh Sultanate, Gampong Pande holds significant archaeological and cultural

⁹⁰ J. Smith, *Heritage Impact Assessments in the UK: Lessons for Global Practice* (London: Heritage Conservation Institute, 2019) at 78.

⁹¹ L. Wijaya, "Cultural Tourism as a Driver of Economic Development in Yogyakarta" (2021) 15:4 *Journal of Tourism and Cultural Heritage* at 118.

value. However, this heritage is increasingly under threat from rapid development, neglect, and insufficient legal enforcement. The study illustrates that while legal frameworks exist at national and regional levels, such as the Cultural Heritage Law No. 11 of 2010 and various Qanun (local Sharia-based regulations), their implementation remains inconsistent. Bureaucratic inertia, lack of coordination between government institutions, and limited political will have often undermined the efficacy of these laws. Consequently, formal legal instruments alone are insufficient to safeguard Aceh's cultural assets.

In this context, the role of community initiatives becomes indispensable. Local residents, historians, NGOs, and activists have played a crucial role in raising awareness, documenting historical evidence, and pressuring authorities to act. Their collective efforts in Gampong Pande, particularly in resisting development projects that threaten cultural sites, demonstrate the power of grassroots mobilization in heritage preservation. Community engagement not only fills the gaps left by legal and governmental shortcomings but also ensures that preservation efforts are rooted in a sense of ownership and identity. The case of Gampong Pande further emphasizes the need for a more integrated and participatory approach to cultural heritage management, bridging legal protections with local knowledge and active public involvement. Strengthening legal frameworks through clearer enforcement mechanisms, capacity building, and public accountability is essential. Additionally, empowering communities through education, funding, and inclusion in decision-making processes will sustain long-term preservation efforts. Ultimately, preserving cultural heritage in Aceh extends beyond protecting ancient sites or relics; it involves sustaining a living connection to the region's historical narrative, spiritual values, and collective memory. The experience of Gampong Pande offers a critical insight: the survival of cultural heritage relies on robust institutional support and the active engagement of the communities to whom that heritage belongs.

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