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The Kingdom of Linge and Early Islamization in Central Aceh

ABSTRACT: Kingdom of Linge is certainly still a stranger in the history of Indonesia. This kingdom does have a reputation that is still immersed in the mud of ignorance. In fact, if explored deeper, its role is very large in the development of Islam in the central part of Aceh. In addition, in a wider scope, the discourse of the history of Central Aceh is also still vaguely heard on the national and international scene. Socialization of the story of the past of Central Aceh needs to be done. Geographically, the Kingdom of Linge is located in the Central Aceh region, Aceh Province, Indonesia. Generally, this area is inhabited by the Gayo ethnic community. The Gayo people inhabit three districts, which in the past were part of this Kingdom, including Central Aceh Regency, Bener Meriah Regency, and Gayo Lues Regency. The Authors used two approaches to reveal the history of Central Aceh. Firstly, the archeological approach, in which has found specimens of early inhabitants of Central Aceh. Secondly, the approach of Islamic history, a study of when Islam entered Central Aceh was an interesting conversation to follow. Islamic "da'wah" (preaching) has become one of the important agendas carried out by the Linge Kingdom to foster its people. The vehicle for historiography is an important medium to present a description of Aceh's past that was not previously revealed, or only cursed. Promoting the history of Central Aceh is similar to moving the wheel of writing history into a more dynamic direction. Excessive discourse will feel less relevant if trapped in reps.

KEY WORDS: The Kingdom of Linge; Prehistory Period; Central Aceh; Islamization and Tradition.

INTRODUCTION

Central Aceh is one of the regions in Aceh Province, Indonesia, which has an interesting past story to follow. The mountainous nature conditions make the stories of the past about them scattered

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and separated from one another. The early history of humans in this region is also still vague, until when Ketut Wiradnyana *et al.* (2011), and his team, managed to find traces of early humans in the Gayo Highlands through its archaeological research (Bowen, 1989; Feener, Daly & Reid eds., 2011; and Wiradnyana *et al.*, 2011).

Not quite up there, the Authors are interested in revealing how the Gayo community in the early days formed its entity. There is an ancient kingdom, whose position is still shrouded with many questions, especially regarding its existence, namely the Kingdom of Linge. Allegedly, the social development of the Gayo community coincided with the seriousness of this royal apparatus in fostering communities in the interior. This kingdom is also an important indicator for the spread of Islam in Central Aceh (Feener, Daly & Reid eds., 2011; Wiradnyana *et al.*, 2011; and Madjid *et al.*, 2018).

This paper is the result of research conducted by the Authors in Central Aceh, in 2018, with the title *Peradaban Islam Awal di Aceh Tengah: Studi atas Kerajaan Linge, Abad XI – XIV* (Early Islamic Civilization in Central Aceh: The Study of Kingdom of Linge in XI – XIV Century). This research was sponsored by the Research and Publishing Center of PUSLITPEN (*Pusat Penelitian dan Penerbitan*) of UIN (*Universitas Islam Negeri* or State Islamic University) Syarif Hidayatullah in Jakarta, Indonesia (Madjid *et al.*, 2018).

This paper will raise how the formation of people in the Central Aceh region, in terms of an ancient history perspective and Islamization there. These two aspects become important to discuss how humans can gather together and make a determination to live together. In addition, the presence of this article is intended to renew the historical discourse of Aceh to make it more lively.

METHOD

This research uses social history explanation method by photographing the social life of the Gayo ethnic community in the past. It is undeniable, political conflict becomes a theme that is often encountered, given that almost all historical narratives in the past mostly highlight the behavior of great men, such as kings, their families or ministers, and military generals. However, it is only an opening to later produce a study of social history that is at

least close to that dimension, especially in the field of daily life and Islamization in Central Aceh (Gottschalk, 1987; Clayton, 1996; and Kuntowijoyo, 2008).

The research method used includes four steps: *heuristics* or collection of research sources; external and internal criticism; interpretation; and historiography or historical writing (Gottschalk, 1987; Sjamsuddin, 2016; and Meda *et al.*, 2017:1-9).

The collection of resources was carried out in Central Aceh. The Authors conducted a number of data searches by visiting places that allegedly were relics of the Kingdom of Linge, such as in the Buntul Linge area. The area is located in the height of the hill in the Linge District, Central Aceh District. There are a number of tombs, unfortunately there is little information about these tombs. It seems that there has never been an archaeological investigation there, so that historical researchers will have a little difficulty in gaining initial knowledge about who was buried there (Sjamsuddin, 2016; Meda *et al.*, 2017; and Madjid *et al.*, 2018).

The investigation was also carried out in a number of other areas, such as to Samarkilang, an area far away in the interior of the Central Aceh hill ridges, where a King of Linge named Sengeda was buried. Unfortunately, due to the harsh terrain conditions, which must cross the overflowing river, the search was stopped. The tomb to be headed is located across the river, while the bridge to get there is broken. The road to the tomb has also not been made, making it difficult for researchers. After weighing, the researchers decided not to continue the journey. The tomb becomes one of the important destinations in field history research (Ririmasse, 2015; Dittmar *et al.*, 2016:713-722; and Madjid *et al.*, 2018).

Searching for oral sources is relied upon to cover data shortages in the field. Some speakers gave a fairly good initial explanation about Linge Kingdom and how Islam came to Central Aceh. The Authors visited the *Majelis Adat Gayo* (Gayo Traditional Council), a local institution that takes care of Gayo customary law and culture. There, the Authors met with several speakers, such as Yusin, Bentara Linge, and Joni. The three are good discussion partners and

provide a number of references and knowledge about how the Linge Kingdom was formed and how Islam came to this highland region. Joni's explanation of the form of early Islamic understanding in Central Aceh is very important to be explored further (Kuntowijoyo, 2008; Haryanto, 2011; and Sjamsuddin, 2016).¹

Several steps to obtain a number of supporting references were carried out. Some books, like *Tarich Atjeh dan Nusantara*, Volume 1, published in 1961, and written by H.M. Zainuddin; and *Gajah Putih Iskandar Muda* by M. Junus Djamil, published without a year, provide sufficient information about the early history of the Kingdom of Linge. In addition, there is a *Kronik Gayo* (Gayo Chronicle) attachment, which is on the last page of the book titled "Riak di Laut Tawar" (Rimple in the Neutral Ocean), published in 2003, written by Muchlis PaEni. These three books are good starters on how to get to know the Kingdom of Linge (*cf* Djamil, n.y.; Zainuddin, 1961; PaEni, 2003; and Madjid *et al.*, 2018).

After collecting data, the next step is data verification. Several sources are grouped according to their type, and then the completeness of the information in it is checked. This step is carried out carefully and carefully, because this process is an important factor in obtaining primary or secondary information from an object of research. Some incomplete sources will be set aside, and then will be reviewed again after information is obtained from sources that contain continuous and chronological information. Oral sources were obtained from interview transcripts, which were then grouped separately, before being combined with narratives that had been built on the basis of written sources (Haryanto, 2011; Sjamsuddin, 2016; and *ibidem* with footnote 1).

Interpretation is an important stage in writing this article. Grouped sources have not been arranged chronologically and are sorted according to integrated sub-explanations. For this reason, we need the expertise of historical writers to process the information into a complete reading, or at least in several pieces of continuous explanation. Historical writers have the authority to regulate the data displayed or ruled out, due to a disability. If this has been done,

¹See, for example, Interview with Bentara Linge (60 years old), in Takengon, Aceh Tengah, Indonesia, on April 30, 2018; Interview with Yusin (70 years old), in Takengon, Aceh Tengah, Indonesia, on April 30, 2018; and Interview with Joni (50 years old), in Takengon, Aceh Tengah, Indonesia, on April 30, 2018.

then proceed to the stage of writing history (Kuntowijoyo, 2008; Sjamsuddin, 2016; and Patterson, 2017:50-58).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The Birth of the Pre-Literary Ages. Antiquity is often associated as an era of decline in a nation. The undeveloped level of human intelligence, intergroup violence, and other backwardness is often associated with ancient humans or living creatures at the time, for those who are allergic to antiquity. This view should be reorganized. The presumption of backwardness is the subjective assessment of humans today. What happens, if we ride a time machine and live in that era. Really, we will see the order of the modern era in its time (Soejono, 1969; Boyden ed., 1970; and Moore & Brumm, 2007).

Central Aceh has an old rock model that has been carved for centuries. Geo-spatially, this region is filled with hills and mountains, and is covered by tropical rain forests. The aquatic world in this region is also emphasized by the existence of the Laut Tawar Lake, which is upstream of the Peusangan River. Seeing this kind of condition, it seems appropriate if since thousands of years ago, the Central Aceh region has been inhabited by human groups. This geographical background supports the livelihoods of people at that time, who were more and more benefiting from the generosity of nature and were not yet familiar with the stages of production found today (Iwabuchi, 1994; Indra, 2015; and Madjid *et al.*, 2018).

Ketut Wiradnyana *et al.* (2011), an archeologist from the Medan Archeology Center (*Balai Arkeologi Medan*), has carried out a number of excavations that succeeded in uncovering prehistoric times in Central Aceh, one of which was the excavation at Loyang Mendale. In their excavation, Ketut Wiradnyana *et al.* (2011) found 4,400-year-old pieces of ancient objects, which indicate a social order that was familiar with the division of social roles. The discovery of pottery with buffalo lines and bones indicates the prehistoric community in Central Aceh had understood the economic meaning and the use of the natural environment as meeting the needs of life (*cf* Wiradnyana *et al.*, 2011:58; Setiawan & Anggraeni, 2016; Wiradnyana, 2016; and Setiawan, 2018).

The discovery of daily tools around the Loyang Mendale site

indicates that the ancient people of Central Aceh already knew what people call contemporary technology. It is undeniable, in pre-historic times, humans are required to be able to get along well with tools. Not yet the growth of production activities, encouraging them to use nature as a whole. Even so, nature often shows an unfriendly face with a steep hill, the harshness of fruit skin or the taste of food that is not too tasty on the tongue if not processed in such a way (Wiradnyana, 2016; Piper, Matsumura & Bulbeck eds., 2017; and Setiawan, 2018).

Armed with reason and endeavor to try (trial and error) early humans can design tools that simplify their lives. Especially in Loyang Mendale, the ancient people there have managed to get out of one of nature's tests through the help of oval axes. This ax is made of stone that has been painted oval shaped. This tool is useful for hunting hunted animals that live around their settlements. In subsequent periods, this prototype ax underwent a series of refinement methods to produce a sharper ax eye (Wiradnyana *et al.*, 2011:90-91; Setiawan & Anggraeni, 2016; Wiradnyana, 2016; and Setiawan, 2018).

Furthermore, Ketut Wiradnyana *et al.* (2011), and other scholars, categorized Loyang Mendale as a site that has the characteristics of Hoabinh and Austronesian. Humans, who lived in the Hoabinh period, usually had an economic background that relied on hunting and food collection on the coast and inland. Hoabinh's life has been found since the discovery of the pottery. The location of the Loyang Mendale site not far from the Laut Tawar Lake proves the Hoabinh concept expressed by Ketut Wiradnyana *et al.* (2011 and 2012) and other scholars. Certainly, this lake has become a place to fulfill the needs of the ancient Acehnese people (Moore & Brumm, 2007; Wiradnyana *et al.*, 2011:4-5 and 2012; PaEni, 2003; Wiradnyana, 2016; and Setiawan, 2018).

Austronesian culture can also be seen from the ancient findings of Loyang Mendale. Common characteristics of Austronesian findings are oval axes; domestication of animals (dogs, pigs); houses on stilts; and earthenware. Some of the objects found at this site fit these characteristics, such as oval axes, square axes, hollow pig fangs, and pottery fragments. Ketut Wiradnyana *et al.* (2011 and 2012), and other scholars, also managed to find a human skeleton, which was

buried in a folded position and his body crushed by a boulder (Said, 1981:7-8; Wiradnyana *et al.*, 2011 and 2012; Setiawan & Anggraeni, 2016; Wiradnyana, 2016; and Setiawan, 2018).

The exploration of Ketut Wiradnyana *et al.* (2011), and his colleagues, certainly brought a new dimension to the development of excess discourse. Before the 2010s, we did not get a complete picture or at least close to the clarity of the ancient life span in Central Aceh. That is how science, will continue to be dynamic, depending on how a scientist approaches it. Thanks to the persistence of fellow archaeologists from the Medan Archeology Center, the people of Central Aceh can understand the social, religious, and political life of prehistoric societies (Wiradnyana *et al.*, 2011; Wiradnyana, 2016; and Setiawan, 2018).

The presence of ancient humans in Central Aceh certainly did not form by itself. There is a migration process from the Asian continent that leads to the Southeast. The ancient inhabitants of the Gayo highlands were the family of *Proto Melayu* (Old Malay) immigrants. Initially, they inhabited the coastal area, but because around 1,500 to 2,500 years ago came the *Deutro Melayu* (Young Malay) tribe, the younger generation decided to move deeper. In this location, they showed their civilization and culture (Said, 1981:7-8; Hatim *et al.*, 2011; Wiradnyana *et al.*, 2012; Endicott, 2015; and Sysling, 2016).

The ancient period in Central Aceh emphasized that a culture of diversity had developed there. The people of Central Aceh were formed, because of the diversity of tribal clans from distant areas. They went on a long journey, because of certain reasons. Their decision to settle in the hills of the Gayo highlands is certainly not a coincidence. From here, the assimilation of humans with different origins of identity began to blossom (Bellwood, Fox & Tryon eds., 2006; Madjid *et al.*, 2018; and Hidayah, 2020).

The Authors need to put forward the early historical discourse in Central Aceh, in terms of the archeological aspects above as a continuity. However, the Linge Kingdom is not a political entity that has no historical setting. The early settlers of Central Aceh, despite their limitations and simplicity, were still able to foster what was called "civilization". The excavation carried out by Ketut Wiradnyana *et al.* (2011 and 2012), and his team above, is certainly a prelude

to the long work of uncovering the past of the people of Central Aceh (Wiradnyana *et al.*, 2011 and 2012; Wiradnyana, 2016; and Setiawan, 2018).

Buntul Linge: The Origin of Gayo People. Central Aceh is a stretch of territory inhabited by multicultural communities. Now, almost most of the great tribes of the country live there. Quantitatively, the Gayo ethnic group is the most populous tribe in the region. Before taking off discussing the vibrant culture of Central Aceh, it would be nice if we look back, how the ethnic Gayo formed (Hurgronje, 1990; Hays, 2015; and Latief, n.y.).

In a history, it is stated that the naming of “Gayo” as a native of Central Aceh was attributed to the absence of some of the people of the coast of Aceh to convert to Islam. In other words, this narration confirms that Gayo people are actually ethnic Acehnese, who decided to move to the interior and did not want to accept Islam. “Gayo” comes from the Acehnese word “Ka Yo”, which means “already afraid” that is fear of being Muslim (Said, 1981:9; Feener, Daly & Reid eds., 2011; and Sustikarini, 2019).

H.M. Zainuddin (1961), and other scholars, first agreed that the ancestors of the Gayo people were coastal people of Aceh, specifically East Aceh and North Aceh. They decided to go inland for fear of embracing Islam. When the Kingdom of Perlak was invaded by Sriwijaya around 670 to 1271, many Acehnese coastal residents fled to the mountains. The Gayo Seumamah and Gayo Serbejadi community groups living near Krueng Penaron (East Aceh) and Takengon are descendants of migrants from Pasai and Peusangan. In addition, there was a group of people who refused to follow the orders of the King of Aceh, who were expanding their influence into Malaya. Together they walked inland until they reached the upper Peusangan River (Laut Tawar Lake), near Takengon (Zainuddin, 1961; Feener, Daly & Reid eds., 2011; and Muchsin, 2018).

In this context, H.M. Zainuddin (1961), then, relied on a statement from *Bustanussalatin* (Garden of the Kings), which means:

As told by the person whose story, there is a group of people in the country, who did not want to convert to Islam, so he fled to the upper reaches of the Peusangan River, so that is why the person named in the country is Gayo to come now (Zainuddin, 1961:15-16).

Almost all parents or activists of old stories know the story of Buntul Linge (Linge Island). This story is closely related to the early history of Linge, which rests on the life story of the first King of Linge named Adi Genali. To this day, there is no clear explanation or general statement from the historians of Central Aceh, or Aceh in general, regarding when the period of life of Adi Genali; and how he could be enthroned in the interior of Aceh. Nevertheless, the notes of the last issue begin to unravel various stories about it (Gani, 2018; Madjid *et al.*, 2018; and Yusnadi, 2020).

The story of Adi Genali can also be used as an initial investigation into the formation of the Gayo ethnic group. In the Gayo people tradition, namely Gayo Chronicles or *Kronik Gayo*, there is the story of Adi Genali (Bowen, 1991; Gani, 2018; and Madjid *et al.*, 2018).

Once there were two brothers from the land of Rum. The youngest brother acts as the holder of the law, while his brother is just a commoner. No one knows when this story happened, because no one really recorded it. After all, not many people can write it, let alone ordinary people. So as not to be mistaken, it is repeated again that the youngest Sultan is being his elder brother is a commoner. The youngest brother has seven daughters, while his older brother has seven sons (Bowen, 1991 and 1993; Gani, 2018; and Madjid *et al.*, 2018).

One day, the seven-year-old son asked their father to give a fishing rod to each of his children. Without thinking, the father took a piece of iron wire. His heart trembled as if he caught a hunch that something was going to happen someday. But, it was not heeded. Each one piece of wire is made into two hooks, while another odd piece is made specifically for the next one line. That odd piece of wire is known as the *Kawat Lurus* (Straight Wire) or the *Kawe Tepat* (Bowen, 1991 and 1993; Gani, 2018; and Madjid *et al.*, 2018).

When the father was busy cutting the wire and forming it into a fishing line, his youngest son came, named Genali. The child took a straight wire that had not been formed into a fishing line and hurried away without the knowledge of his father and siblings. When his father finished forming six hooks, he was surprised that the odd piece of wire, he was going to form into the seventh line was missing and none of his six children claimed to have taken it. At

the same time, they realized Genali did not exist. Then, they went looking for the youngest to the seashore (Bowen, 1991 and 1993; Jarwati & Ardalina, 2017; and Gani, 2018).

On the seafront, there is a tree trunk that has fallen and is floating. When a wave comes, the log swings and rises, lulled on the water. On the tree trunk, Genali is fishing. *Kawat Lurus* or *Kawe Tepat* is thrown into the water and immediately struck by a large fish. Genali felt her fishing line tense and the trunk of her footing rocked. Genali did not let go of his grip. Together with the tree, he moved further away from the edge of the sea. The big fish pulled him further into the middle of the sea (Melalatoa, 1982; Bowen, 1991 and 1993; and Gani, 2018).

It was God's destiny, Genali was stranded on an island with the tree, he was driving and the big fish that pulled him. The small island, where it was stranded, was shaped like a dish. The hills on the island are neither visible nor forested. Around the island, it is still surrounded by the sea. According to old news, the island was named Buntul Lingge, then later became the forerunner to the Land of Gayo known today (Bowen, 1991 and 1993; Gani, 2018; and Madjid *et al.*, 2018).

After being stranded for months, Genali, who one day stood on the edge of the beach, saw a ship that happened to pass by around the island, where he lived. He shouted for calling, because there was something message and entrust he would deliver to the captain of the ship. His voice was loudly heard on the ship, but no one saw it. Looks like the captain was afraid to close his ship to the island, because maybe he thought there was a danger of threatening there. Immediately, he hurried away from the island, but he was unable to control his ship. Every time he steered his ship away, at that moment also the ship returned to its original place and getting closer to the island. Four times he intends to stay away, as much as that ship leads to the island of Genali (Madjid, 2010; Sukiman, 2014; and Gani, 2018).

All ship passengers chant spells and repel prayers, because it is considered that there is a genie disturbing them. The master finally lowered the anchor in the shallow waters of the island of Genali and anchored ever closer. Shortly, thereafter, a young man appeared who was not clothed in a single cloth. He is none other than Genali.

To the ship's captain, Genali entrusted gifts and messages to be delivered directly to the Sultan in power. Genali also advised the skipper that the Sultan would send him a white rooster with a perfect crow and a four-foot white cloth (Madjid, 2010; Gani, 2018; and Jamhir, 2019).

For a month, the ship arrived from Genali Island in the land of Rum. Genali submissions and messages were delivered by the skipper to the ruling Sultan. Genali's gift is apparently a fish. However, what a surprise because in the belly of the fish, not containing fish eggs, but the treasure of God, gold and diamonds are abundant. Because nothing like this had ever happened, the Sultan summoned the *Sagi Pendari* (the Scholars of Kingdom) and ministers, religious scholars, ranks and representatives of the people to come to an agreement. After a long time, the agreement went without a single word of decision, all of them became confused because they did not understand the meaning of gifts and orders from someone unknown (Madjid, 2013; Peacock & Gallop eds., 2015; and Gani, 2018).

Suddenly, a royal princess named Putri Terus Mata facing her father. He (father) said that the meaning of the gift was a proposal for him. Then, the daughter of King of Rum pleaded with her father, so that he was allowed to fulfill the request of someone unknown, as his wife. The King, who was initially shocked by the request of his daughter, slowly began to look thoughtful. He also decided to pass the wishes of the princess (Madjid, 2010; Peacock & Gallop eds., 2015; and Gani, 2018).

Sultan of Rum provides ships, *Sagi Pendari*, and collects provisions for Putri Terus Mata. Chickens, ducks, stems, and *bebesi* grass are innumerable luggage in the princess' ship. In addition, participated with the daughter of several caregivers and a middle-aged woman (Madjid, 2010; Peacock & Gallop eds., 2015; and Gani, 2018).

For a month the ship of the troupe, Putri Terus Mata sailed, arrived on the unknown little island where Genali was. The white cloth was immediately handed over early, because the skipper knew that Genali was not clothed in a single cloth. After that, Putri Terus Mata down to say hello, while saying introductory sentences. The ship belonging to the Princess of the Eye then made a home. That's

where everything is prepared for all wedding needs. The ladies-in-law made turmeric festivals, the sticky rice recited as is usually the case of a large wedding ceremony (Madjid, 2010; Peacock & Gallop eds., 2015; and Gani, 2018).

From the country of Rum brought a variety of equipment that was immediately used in a new place. In addition, seven strong and diligent people were also brought along as messengers. After arriving the day, small *kenduri* (ritual) has been prepared; and Tengku Kadhi is also carrying out the marriage law to Bujang Genali, who later becomes the husband of Putri Terus Mata (Madjid, 2010; Peacock & Gallop eds., 2015; and Gani, 2018).

It was this Genali, who first became the King of Gayo. The name of the island, where he lived, was then more famous as the Kingdom of Linge. The origin of the name "Linge" is the name of a person who screams, but his body is invisible. "Leinge", said the Gayo. The word "leinge", then, changed little by little to "Lingga", and now it is simply called "Lingge" in Gayo dialect. King Genali immediately led his people to build the city. The people there live in pleasure. The *Sagi Pendar* help their King to work in an orderly and not awkward manner (PaEni, 2003:17-20; Gani, 2018; and Madjid *et al.*, 2018).

Around the 16th century, there are other immigrant stories that are no less riveting. Once upon a time, there were 7 Batak youths from Tanah Karo, who came to Central Aceh. They have heard the famous news about the beauty of the Laut Tawar Lake. They want to prove the rumor. After a while enjoying the beauty of the lake, they saw a crowd of people gambling. They were interested and started to gamble. After experiencing one defeat, the Batak youths managed to bankrupt the bookies. The young men are increasingly addicted to gambling. They also began to explore gambling places and get victory everywhere. One of their gambling spots is enshrined as the name of the area: *Penjudin* or *Simpang Empat* (Abdullah, 2009; Al-Gayoni, 2012; and Gani, 2018).

At the same time, the Kingdom of Linge was held by a King named Sengeda. One time, the losing bookies faced Sengeda to ask the King to criminalize the young men from Karo. The King refused. That decision made the gambling bookies hurt. They also agreed

to incite the people to prosecute the Batak youth unilaterally (Al-Gayoni, 2012; Gani, 2018; and Madjid *et al.*, 2018).

Some people affected by incitement came to the residence of the Batak youth in the village of Bukit, in Bebesen, near Takengon. Cross disputes occur until the fight ends. A young Batak man was killed by a sharp weapon. Another young man named Bur-Bur was arrested by residents, while five other young men managed to escape. Citizens who have been burnt with rage hunt them. Three young men were captured and killed in the village now called *Tan Saril Batak Karo*. Not long after, two other people were captured and then hanged by residents. The place where they were hung was enshrined as the name of a region called *Pegantung*, now in the Pegasing Sub-District (Abdullah, 2009; Al-Gayoni, 2012; and Gani, 2018).

Raja Batak Karo was so stung to hear that his people were killed in Linge. He received advice from his astrologer that the one who was able to complete this task of revenge was Leubee Kader, a Batak cleric, who had just returned home to study religion in Kuala Lawet, West Aceh. In several days later, he led Bataks 27 troops from various clans. His arrival before Sengeda was actually not to fight, but to ask for *diyot* (fines) for the death of the previous Batak youth. The war ensued, causing several Linge residents to become victims (Al-Gayoni, 2012; Gani, 2018; and Madjid *et al.*, 2018).

The war between the Linge Kingdom against the Bataks 27 did not last long. Leubee Kader himself was not at home at long disputes with the majority of Linge residents, who were Muslim. Plans for a ceasefire were initiated by both parties. Leubee Kader and Bataks 27 representing Karo met with Raja Bukit "Lah", Raja Gunung, and Penghulu Lot, who represented Linge. Sengeda himself was not present at the meeting, because he was still in evacuation. This meeting was held at Mersah Kala, on the edge of Laut Kala Lake. As a fulfillment of the *diyot* requested by Leubee Kader, Linge gave part of the Bukit village area to the Karo Kingdom (Al-Gayoni, 2012; Gani, 2018; and Madjid, 2020).

Some times later, Raja Bale, one of the leaders of Gayo, led the Linge royal peace ceremony with Karo at Geulanggang Meusara

Alun, located in the *Pendopo* (Gazebo-Like Building) now. The invited guests were from the two Kingdoms, who had reconciled. The Sultan of Aceh, then, endorsed the Leubee Kader as Raja Chik Bebesen. This position implies that he is one of the spreaders of Islam in Central Aceh did not mean traditional leaders. The Bataks 27 troops, then, settled in Bebesen. To this day, their offspring are called the “Batak 27” (Latief, n.y.:81-89; Bowen, 1991:55; and Madjid, 2020).

The existence of the “Batak 27” story emphasizes that the Gayo community is an inclusive type of population. They accept any ethnicity that comes and lives near the original ethnic group, the Gayo ethnic group. Later, the existence of this Batak helped bring a new nuance in the social system of the Gayo people, namely by the appearance of the influence of the Batak fam or clan in naming the Gayo people. Among the Batak fam investigated came from the existence of “Batak 27”, among others: *Munte, Cebro, Melala, Linge, Tebe*, and so on. Some of these clan names have similarities to those found in Karo, such as *Munte Singabero, Meliala*, and others. Later, the Chik (Bebesen) people thought they were descendants of the “Batak 27” or Karo Batak (Hasjmy ed., 1978:476; Bowen, 1991:18; and Madjid, 2020).

Early Islamization in Central Aceh. There are various versions of how Islam arrived in Central Aceh. Opinion about it may be to provide additional theory or even criticism of the Islamization in Aceh, which is considered as the starting point for the spread of Islam to all regions of the *Nusantara* or Indonesian archipelago (Bowen, 1993; Birchok, 2013; and Madjid *et al.*, 2018).

Several references that have previously circulated, one of which is embedded in the book of H.M. Zainuddin (1961), entitled *Tarich Atjeh dan Nusantara* [History of Aceh and Archipelago], Volume I, mentioned that Islam to the highlands of Gayo originated from the coastal Aceh region. Actually, the Gayo ethnic group, who live in Central Aceh, are also Acehnese, as are Acehnese who live on the coast. Their background gets the name *Gayo*, because their ancestors did not deign to convert to Islam, and chose to get rid of

themselves into the interior (Zainuddin, 1961:15-16; Bowen, 1993; and Madjid, 2020).

The Authors get several renewable facts about how Islam came to Central Aceh. Interestingly, almost all of these opinions still revolve around oral sources. Bentara Linge, a member of the Gayo Traditional Council, said as follows:

[...] Islam reached the Gayo land in a long time, namely during the life of Bujang Genali. He is a figure believed to be the ancestor of the Gayo people. His past is still shrouded in mystery, because some of the interviewees who were questioned cannot ensure that Genali lived in what year, or at what time, the world was in a state.²

Genali taught the teachings of monotheism to the people of Central Aceh, who mostly still adhered to Hindu-Buddhism. The form of monotheism is the recognition that all human beings are obliged to worship a single God called *Allah*. Yusin, an elder of the Gayo Traditional Council (*Majelis Adat Gayo*), said that when he made a pilgrimage to the tombs of the Linge Kings in the Buntul Linge area, he would get several gravestones written *la illaha ilallah* (no god except Allah). Of course, the question will arise, why not continue on the usual sentence into the canal, namely *Muhammad Rasulullah* or Muhammad as messenger of Allah (Bowen, 1993; Sukiman, 2014; and Madjid, 2020).³

This indicates that, at that time, what was called Islamization in Central Aceh was when someone already knew his God was *Allah*, but did not know the Prophet Muhammad and his teachings. In this monotheism religion also has not known the obligation to carry out religious rituals as contained in the Pillars of Faith, namely the *shahada* (claiming to believe in one God, and acknowledge the truth of the message of the Prophet Muhammad as the messenger of God), praying in five times, fasting in the month of *Ramadhan*, performing tithes (*zakat*), and performing pilgrimage to Mecca (Bowen, 1993; Birchok, 2013; Sukiman, 2014; Madjid *et al.*, 2018; and *ibidem* with footnote 3).

The early Islamic understanding of the Gayo people had a form that was close to the beliefs of naturalism in Europe. Early understanding of Islam is still believed by the influence of admiration

²Interview with Bentara Linge (60 years old), in Takengon, Aceh Tengah, Indonesia, on April 30, 2018.

³See also, for example, Interview with Yusin (70 years old), in Takengon, Aceh Tengah, Indonesia, on April 30, 2018.

for the forces of nature. For the Gayo people, the verdant plateau and the stagnant water in Laut Tawar Lake are not only limited to geographic inlets, but hold a certain magical power that helps to understand that their existence is only a small creation and is the fruit of a Greater Creator. The magnitude of the continuous mountain range continues as if a bridge of their cosmological understanding of something that needs to be praised (Bowen, 1993; PaEni, 2003; and Madjid *et al.*, 2018:56-57).

Joni, a member of the Gayo Traditional Council, revealed as follows:

[...] the Gayo people cannot be separated from the literary tradition. In the Gayo tradition, there is a literary art called "didong". This artistry combines the similarity of motion accompanied by the reading of oral literature, whose contents concern religious issues, myths, history, and the socio-geographical conditions of the Gayo people. In retrospect, Gayo's literary tradition has a correlation with the discourse of Islamization in Central Aceh. The early scholars used this media to introduce the conception of God to the Gayo community.⁴

Significant developments in Islam only occurred when there was a preacher named Adi Genali, who originated in the Land of Rum. Rum State is a place commonly referred to in Malay historical literature as in *Sulalatussalatin* (Garden of the Kings) or *Bustanussalatin* (the Crown of Kings). This country is located in what is now referred to as Ottoman Turkey. Adi Genali taught the inhabitants of Central Aceh about the Prophet Muhammad; and, at the same time, carried out various obligations of compulsory worship, which became a means of submitting a servant to his Lord. Yusin acknowledged that Bujang Genali and Adi Genali actually had blood relations, but that they were over generations (Braginsky, 1998; Mu'jizah, 2011; Burhanuddin, 2016:381; Madjid *et al.*, 2018; and *ibidem* with footnote 3).

There is a difference in information from those in the oral source with the Gayo Chronicle (*Kronik Gayo*), an oral tradition collected by Mukhlis PaEni in 2003. It was said that Adi Genali was a young man from Rum. He married a daughter named Putri Terus Mata and built Linge Kingdom in Buntul Linge (*cf* Bowen, 1993; PaEni, 2003:17-20; and Madjid, 2020).

⁴Interview with Joni (50 years old), in Takengon, Aceh Tengah, Indonesia, on April 30, 2018.

If we go back to the previous statement, refer also to the description of Bentara Linge, who became the first King of Linge was Bujang Genali and not Adi Genali. This difference is, of course, unique in that it can ignite other studies in depth. Genali is a person, who has the blood of Gayo; while Adi Genali is a figure who came from Turkey and possibly his blood has been mixed with Turkish blood (Bowen, 1993; Peacock & Gallop eds., 2015; Burhanuddin, 2016; Madjid *et al.*, 2018:18; and *ibidem* with footnote 2).

CONCLUSION

The history of Central Aceh was previously still an insert in Indonesia's national history. This simple writing is the Authors' endeavor to introduce to the public that there are still a lot of historical discourses in regions that have not been raised, especially regarding the discourse of local history. For this reason, this presentation should be able to ignite the awareness of the writing of the history of researchers or historians to explore further, in order to obtain a clearer narrative about the history of Central Aceh.

About the history of Islam in Central Aceh is an endemic study, and is still an initial study. The steep terrain to gather one or two local speakers is one of the reasons for the unfinished research on how Islam can be known by the people of Central Aceh. The material presented above, of course, will not be able to satisfy the curiosity of the reader regarding the periodization of Islam and how the form of Islamic influence in the midst of the population of Central Aceh, and other discussions that are pleasing to it. On top of that limitation, this paper can be used as an initial compass to explore other relevant historical sources.⁵

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⁵**Statement:** We, undersigned below, state that our paper is not product of plagiarism, not to be submitted to the other journal(s), reviewed as well as published by other scholarly journals; and finally having received, it will also not to be withdrawn by the Authors from this TAWARIKH journal. This statement letter was made to be used by the Editor as an appropriate.

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