



Meubobo Alang: The Sunat Rasul Tradition of the Kluet Tribe in South Aceh

Hasbaini Ben^{1*}, Dina Miftahul Jannah², Sepri Kurniadi³, Anhar⁴, Muhibuddin⁵

^{1,2,3,4}Politeknik Aceh Selatan, Indonesia, ⁵STIKes Medika Nurul Islam, Indonesia

¹hasbainibean@gmail.com, ²dinamiftahul55@gmail.com, ³seprikurniadi@gmail.com, ⁴anharpoltas@gmail.com,

⁵muhibbudin.mni@gmail.com



*Corresponding Author

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ABSTRACT

The *Meubobo alang* tradition is a form of intangible cultural heritage that is still preserved by the Kluet community in South Aceh. This ritual is an important part of the *Sunat rasul* (Prophetic Circumcision) procession. In this ritual, the boy to be circumcised is paraded using an *alang* (a sedan chair or litter adorned with traditional ornaments), accompanied by prayers and various symbols of respect. This study was aimed to be uncovered the cultural meaning, historical background, and social function of the *Meubobo alang* tradition within the life structure of the Kluet community. Using a qualitative approach with an ethnographic method, data was collected through direct field observation, in-depth interviews with customary figures and families who practice the tradition, as well as the review of cultural documents. The research findings indicate that *Meubobo alang* does not only serve as a series of ceremonial activities but also contains spiritual, symbolic, and social values deeply rooted in the local culture. This tradition plays a role in maintaining harmonious family relations, reinforcing ethnic identity, and serving as a medium for transmitting moral values and character to the younger generation. Amidst the current of change and the influence of modernization, *Meubobo alang* maintains an important position as a form of local wisdom preservation that unites customary values with the principles of Islamic teachings. Thus, this tradition not only reflects cultural continuity but also demonstrates the Kluet community's ability to preserve their identity and ancestral values.

INTRODUCTION

Aceh is a region in Indonesia known for its strong integration of Islamic values and indigenous cultural traditions. Among its many ethnic groups, the Kluet community in South Aceh retains various ancestral customs that continue to survive amid social change. One of the most distinctive cultural practices is the *Meubobo alang* tradition, a procession performed as part of the *Sunat rasul* (Prophetic Circumcision) ceremony. This tradition is not only a celebratory activity but also a cultural expression filled with spiritual meaning, symbolic values, and social cohesion. Within the Kluet community, *Meubobo alang* represents an important phase in a boy's life as he transitions into a new stage of social and religious maturity. The procession, which includes parading the boy on an adorned *alang* (litter), becomes a medium through which collective meanings and moral values are transmitted across generations.

Historically, the origin of *Meubobo alang* is believed to be closely tied to the early spread of Islam in the Kluet region. Local oral traditions explain that customary leaders and religious figures integrated Islamic principles with existing cultural practices, resulting in a unique form of ritual that harmonizes religious teachings with customary norms. Over time, the tradition grew to embody expressions of respect, purification, and honor for the child undergoing circumcision. Although written documentation regarding its earliest practice is limited, the continuity of this tradition within the collective memory of the community demonstrates its cultural resilience. Its survival until today also reflects the ability of the Kluet people to maintain ancestral values despite modernization and shifting lifestyles.

In contemporary society, *Meubobo alang* plays a strategic role in strengthening social ties and preserving local wisdom. The involvement of extended family members, customary officials, religious leaders, and community members highlights strong social solidarity and mutual cooperation (*gotong royong*). Every step of the procession from the preparation, adornment of the child, parading, to the handing-over ceremony, contains symbolic messages about communal responsibility, kinship, and the collective affirmation of cultural identity. For the Kluet community, the tradition serves not only as a ceremonial expression but also as a cultural mechanism that shapes character, religious awareness, and moral responsibility in the younger generation.





Given its cultural depth, this research aims to provide a comprehensive study of the *Meubobo alang* tradition from anthropological and sociocultural perspectives. The objectives of this study are: (1) to explain the historical background and origins of *Meubobo alang* within the Kluet community; (2) to analyze the symbolic and spiritual values embedded in its procession; and (3) to examine its social functions in strengthening kinship relations, community identity, and moral education. In addition, this research discusses the relevance of *Meubobo alang* amid the influence of modernization and the changing cultural dynamics in South Aceh society.

This study is expected to offer deeper insights into the cultural significance of *Meubobo alang* as part of the intangible cultural heritage of the Kluet tribe. By documenting and analyzing this tradition, the research contributes to the academic discourse on local wisdom, cultural preservation, and the interaction between Islamic values and indigenous customs. Ultimately, this study emphasizes that *Meubobo alang* is more than a ceremonial practice, it is a living tradition that shapes identity, strengthens social harmony, and upholds cultural continuity in the Kluet community.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Definition of Culture

Culture can be understood as a social construct resulting from a learning process that includes human ideas, actions, and products, which function as a system of values, norms, and symbols in collective life. According to Hofstede, Gert Jan & Minkov, Michael (2021), culture is a pattern of values, norms, and practices learned and inherited from one generation to the next, shaping the way individuals interact within a particular social group. Keesing, Roger M. & Strathern, Andrew (2020) define culture as encompassing a system of knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, and customs, as well as other capabilities and habits acquired by humans as members of society. Smith, Linda Tuhiwai (2021) describes culture as a field of struggle for meaning that is not neutral, but political and contextual, especially in postcolonial societies. Puspita, Dian (2023) states that culture is a representation of values, expressions, and symbolic practices that continuously undergo transformation in the interaction between local tradition and globalization. Furthermore, Nugroho, Haryanto (2022) explains that culture is a system of life that encompasses collective behavior, habits, and a structure of meaning inherited and maintained through social symbols.

Definition of *Meubobo Alang*

According to Zulkifli (2020), *Meubobo alang* is a customary procession in the *sunat rasul* series that includes rituals of purification, welcoming, and symbolic affirmation of the boy who has entered a new phase in his life. This procession is completed with the use of an *alang* (a small decorated bed/litter) as a symbol of honor and maturity. Yusnir Selian (2025) further explains that *Meubobo alang* is a manifestation of love and respect from an uncle (*pemamoan*) toward his nephew (*beubere*).



Figure 1. The entourage carrying *Meubobo alang*

Then Muhammad Adlan (2025) says that *Meubobo alang* involves taking the child of an elder sister or brother, adorning them with traditional clothing at the *Pemamoan's* house, and preferably having them stay overnight. All their needs are provided for, including 1 set of clothes and a henna application (*kacari*).

Origin

The *Meubobo alang* tradition is believed to be rooted in a blend of Islamic teachings and local customs. In the oral history of the Kluet community, this tradition has existed since the early spread of Islam in the South Aceh region. In the oral history of the Kluet community, this tradition emerged as a form of respect and welcome for an important phase in a boy's life, namely *Khitan* or *Sunat rasul* (circumcision). The *Alang* (a small, beautifully decorated bed/litter) becomes the main symbol in this procession, reflecting purity, honor, and the child's readiness to enter the stage of adulthood. Over time, this tradition not only contains religious values but also becomes a cultural expression rich in





social meaning. Although no written records are found regarding the beginning of the *Meubobo alang* implementation, its existence continues to live in the collective memory of the Kluet community and is passed down across generations. This procession is believed to have taken place since the early spread of Islam in the interior of Aceh, when customary figures and local clerics harmonized Islamic values with local culture. Thus, *Meubobo alang* is evidence of the harmonization between religion and tradition that strengthens local cultural identity and tightens social relationships among citizens.



Figure 2. The *Meubobo alang* parading procession accompanied by the *Gelombang* martial arts characteristic of the Kluet ethnic group

Meaning of *Meubobo Alang*

Symbolically, *Meubobo alang* is a public declaration that a boy has undergone an important phase in his life. This tradition reflects purification, a transition in social status, and readiness to assume the role of a male in society. *Alang* symbolizes purity, honor, and maturity. Symbolically, *Meubobo alang* represents an important transition phase in a boy's life, from childhood to adulthood. The *alang* or small, beautifully decorated bed/litter is a symbol of honor and purity, while the parading procession and prayers reflect the purification of the soul and the strengthening of religious values. This tradition also demonstrates social recognition of the child's new status as an individual who begins to bear responsibility within the social structure of the community. Thus, *Meubobo alang* is not just a ceremonial ritual, but also a means of moral and spiritual education for the younger generation.

According to Hasbaini (2025), a Kluet culture observer, the *Meubobo alang* tradition has been inherited from generation to generation and is still practiced today by the Kluet community. He emphasizes that this tradition is important to preserve because it is an intangible cultural heritage that strengthens kinship ties (*silaturahmi*) between families and communities. Besides being a form of practicing Islamic teachings, *Meubobo alang* also symbolizes togetherness as well as the cultural identity of the Kluet tribe that still endures today. Although it is not known exactly when this tradition first emerged, *Meubobo alang* has long been practiced by the Kluet community. This activity is usually held a day before the circumcision event and serves as a means to strengthen social relations as well as common entertainment.

Furthermore, *Meubobo alang* contains a strong social meaning as a form of togetherness and solidarity among the Kluet community. The involvement of family, neighbors, customary figures, and religious figures in this procession shows the high value of mutual cooperation (*gotong royong*) and social harmony. This tradition strengthens kinship ties (*silaturahmi*) among citizens, reinforces collective identity, and serves as a space for the intergenerational inheritance of cultural and religious values. In the context of modern society, *Meubobo alang* remains relevant as a form of local cultural preservation that is adaptive and full of meaning.



Figure 3. *Meubobo alang* parade and welcoming of the circumcised child



METHOD

To provide a clear overview of the methodological process used in this study, the research flow is presented in this following;

Research Preparation;

- a) Identification of research problems
- b) Determination of research focus
- c) Formulation of research objectives
- d) Selection of qualitative approach (ethnographic method)

Data Collection Stage; this stage consists of three main techniques:

- a) Observation; conducted directly during the *Meubobo alang* procession. Focus on activities, symbols, interactions, and cultural context.
- b) In-depth Interviews; customary figures, religious leaders, parents and families involved in the tradition. Purpose; exploring meanings, history, and symbolic values

Document Study;

- a) Historical archives
- b) Customary manuscripts
- c) Cultural notes from community figures

Data Reduction;

- a) Sorting relevant information
- b) Coding thematic categories
- c) Grouping data based on core themes
- d) Identifying cultural patterns and symbolic elements

Data Analysis;

- a) Interpretation of cultural meaning
- b) Analysis of symbolic and spiritual values
- c) Examination of social functions and community identity
- d) Ethnographic interpretation of traditional practices

Verification (Triangulation);

- a) Cross-checking observations, interviews, and documents
- b) Validation through member-check with informants
- c) Consistency analysis of cultural data

Conclusion Drawing;

- a) Synthesizing findings
- b) Formulating cultural significance of *Meubobo alang*
- c) Concluding its role in identity, social cohesion, and cultural continuity

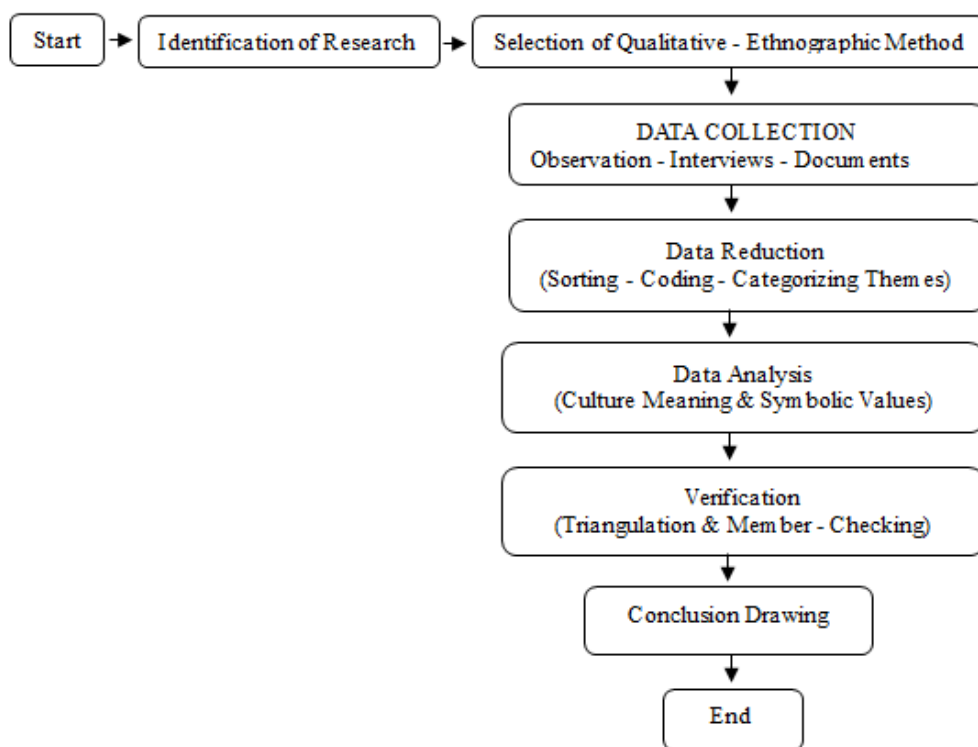


Figure 4. Flowchart of the Research

RESULT

The *Meubobo alang* process is preceded by a family discussion between the mother's side of the family, hereinafter referred to as *pemamoan*, and the father's side of the family, hereinafter referred to as *pewalian*. The *Meubobo alang* itself is only carried out at the *sunat rasul* feast and not in any other feast ceremony in the Kluet tribe. This is then followed by a larger meeting of the *ninik mamak* (extended family of both the father's and mother's sides) to prepare when and where the *Meubobo alang* feast (*kenduri*) procession will take place, as part of the *sunat rasul* feast series. Next, the village customary official (*pegawai adat*) and legal official (Village Imam and his staff) set the date, month, and year the feast will be held. Usually, it's not long, about 2-3 weeks after the major meeting is held.

For the *Pemamoan* (the mother's side of the family/elder/younger sibling), because this feast is held on the *Pewalian* side (the father's side of the family/elder/younger sibling), as a form of respect, the *Pemamoan* is the executor of the feast and the organizer of the sequence of events. Thus, there is a saying/expression in the Kluet community: "*Pemamoan potok tiwon, perwalian nyujung utang*." This means the mother's side of the family struggles to make the event a success, while the father's side of the family bears the debt/costs incurred for the event. The feast used to be held at the *Pewalian*'s place, but currently, it is held at the child's parents' house.

After that, as the role of the *Pemamoan*, the "*Serah pemamoan*" (handover of the *Pemamoan*) is carried out. In this case, it is not individually but to all the relatives (*turang*) on the mother's side of the child to be circumcised. As a form of respect for the child, the child is borrowed/escorted from the uncle's house, adorned with traditional clothing, and paraded to the house where the *Sunat rasul* event is being held. This procession can be done only within the family, but it is better to do it by inviting village customary officials, village legal officials, youth, and the community. This activity is followed by the bringing of feast provisions from the *Pemamoan* and the community, such as rice, vegetables (jackfruit), betel nut, coconut, oil, chicken eggs, sugar, and if possible, a goat, and so on.

Then, upon arrival at the celebration house, the elder of the entourage hands over the circumcised child to the *Pewalian* along with the brought items, accompanied by the customary officials, legal officials, youth, and the community who joined the *Meubobo alang* entourage.



Figure 5. Brought items of Meubobo alang

The handover words are, “*inomo anak yang kami along pagi ne, dan ino lot sekedar bantuan kendurian sedaya mampu nami, inomo rupo kami cidah kon, suaro kami pedengkoh kon, soh bo Allah, soh bo nabi soh bo bandu.*” The meaning is: “here is the child we fetched this morning, and here is a little help for the feast to the best of our ability, this is the form we show, the words we convey, may it reach God, may it reach the Prophet, may it reach the relatives.”

After that, the welcoming address from the *Pewalian* is, “*untuk pelaksanaan no, mesti nguh diserah ko bo nami, tapi tetop ka m yang ngelom acara no janah, ulang ka m sungkan-sungkan, rutrut kito janah.*” The meaning is: “for the execution of this feast, even though it has been handed over to us, you will still manage the event here, do not hesitate, let us work together here.”



Figure 6. Handover of the circumcised child from the *pemamoan* to the *perwalian*

Research shows that *Meubobo alang* is not just a ceremony, but part of the cultural identity of the Kluet community. The child to be circumcised is paraded with an adorned *alang*/litter, accompanied by prayers and traditional arts. This tradition strengthens kinship ties (*silaturahmi*) and shows the harmonization between Islamic values and customs. *Meubobo alang* also serves as a means of character education for the boy to become a responsible individual who respects customs.



Figure 7. *Kue Selubayung/bale pukot* cake and gifts as complementary brought items during *Meubobo alang*



DISCUSSION

The *Meubobo alang* tradition is an intangible cultural heritage of the Kluet community that has been passed down through generations and remains preserved today. This procession is not only a ceremonial ritual in the series of *sunat rasul*, but it is laden with spiritual, symbolic, and social values that strengthen kinship ties (*silaturahmi*), affirm cultural identity, and serve as a means of character education for the younger generation. Amidst modernization, *Meubobo alang* remains relevant as a form of harmonization between custom and Islamic teachings, as well as a symbol of togetherness that needs to be maintained and preserved.

CONCLUSION

The tradition of *Meubobo alang* is an intangible cultural heritage of the Kluet community in Indonesia, passed down from generation to generation and preserved to this day. This procession is not merely a ceremonial ritual within the circumcision tradition, but is rich in spiritual, symbolic, and social values that strengthen communal ties, affirm cultural identity, and serve as a means of character education for the younger generation. Amidst modernisation, *Meubobo alang* remains relevant as a form of harmony between customary practices and Islamic teachings, as well as a symbol of togetherness that must be protected and preserved.

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