

Acehnese Local Wisdom Through the Lens of Acehnese Novelists During the Times of Political Conflict and Peace Agreement

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ABSTRACT

Acehnese novelists have a role in expressing and preserving the socio-cultural conditions of the Acehnese people in Aceh, Indonesia, especially regarding the points of local wisdom in their works. This study deals with local wisdom as reflected in the novels by Acehnese novelists from 2005 to 2011, the times in which the Acehnese people endured the political conflict and peace agreement with the Indonesian government. It covers the aspects of forms and use of local wisdom embedded within the novels as narrated by the Acehnese authors in these rough times. It employed the qualitative-analytical method and content analysis technique. A number of nine selected novels written by Acehnese novelists and published between the years 2005-2011 were chosen for data analysis. The results showed that the local wisdom in the novels was categorized into four themes: (1) belief in myths, (2) preservation of historical values, (3) safeguarding traditional houses, and (4) the practice of greetings and nobility. This study has revealed the local wisdom believed and practiced by the Acehnese society through the novels. They take part in shaping the direction of society's life. These pearls of wisdom cover all sides of life to support a strong and bonded society.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Literary works always play a role in conveying various local wisdom. They also take part in shaping the direction of life. In fact, in the work of Acehnese novelists in Indonesia, many of the Acehnese cultures are revealed (Wildan, 2009, 2011). Aceh is one of the provinces in Indonesia and is located at the tip of Sumatra Island. Accordingly, literary work is the spokesperson of a nation. One of the most popular literary works is the novel. Novel is one form of a literature work or craft that expresses more of a thing, more detailed and

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involves complex of problems. The works of Acehese novelists contain the issue of local wisdom that can encompass many aspects, which lengthen the time and space and typically follow the background of the authors' life.

Consequently, this study intends to investigate the works written by Acehese novelists and how they root local wisdom into their novels. We further chose the novels that were published from the years 2005 to 2011. This is because these works were published during the period of two important events in Aceh, Indonesia: the political conflict and the earthquake and tsunami that hit the province in 2004. The later event subsequently created a peace agreement between the Free Aceh Movement (or Gerakan Aceh Merdeka, abbreviated as GAM) and the Government of the Republic of Indonesia (RI) in August 2005 (Ronnie, 2016). The years prior to 2004 were assumed to be the peak period of the Acehese struggle to be free from the Indonesian government. In contrast, the years after 2004 were a period of referral to GAM within the frame of the Indonesian government. Hence, we seek to investigate the extent to which Acehese novelists in expressing the local wisdom of the Acehese people in their novels that are told during these rough times. Accordingly, this study intends to answer the following research question: What are the forms of the Acehese local wisdom in the novels written by Acehese novelists?

The results of this study are expected to add knowledge on the Acehese local wisdom, especially on what the Acehese use as the acumen of their life during rough times. These novels are also another form of preserving and documenting the Acehese local wisdom, which is a moral and spiritual guide for their communities, inspiration for knowledge, and patron for harmonious and equal relations between people and between people and nature (Pesurnay, 2018).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Local Wisdom

Lexically, experts define local wisdom to be in line with indigenous knowledge, local genius, cultural bliss, collective wisdom, the invention of tradition, and cultural identity (Effendy, 2015; Hobsbawm, 1983; Sartini, 2008). Generally, it can be understood as local ideas that are wise, full of wisdom, and values, that are embedded and followed by community members. Conceptually, local wisdom is human wisdom that relies on the philosophy of values, ethics, ways, and behaviors that are traditionally established. To conclude, local wisdom is a value that is considered good and right, so it can timely survive and even be institutionalized (Lubis, 2019). The localization limit is relatively in character. Sartini (2008) further says that the localization is related to 'the boundaries of the social environment' from the enforceability of the 'substance of wisdom' in the practice of life. Etymologically, local wisdom is a human endeavor using sense of cognition to act and behave toward something, objects, or events in a given space. It is explicit knowledge that is present and evolves over a long period. It is a potential energy source from collective knowledge systems so that societies can live together dynamically and peacefully.

Local knowledge, which is a component of the traditional knowledge system, has been demonstrated to be essential for societal resilience (Fakhriati & Erman, 2022). Substantially, local wisdom is the values believed to be true and applied as references in behaving in the community (Ridwan, 2007). Individually, it results from the dialectic between the self and the environment. It is born from the work of cognitive individuals as an effort to establish values. In a group, local wisdom is an effort to discover shared values resulting from

patterns of relationships arranged in an environment. That way, local wisdom is a product of the past culture constantly used as a grip of life. It is local in setting, but its value is universal. It can be present in various forms, such as values, norms, ethics, beliefs, customs, customary law, and special rules.

Local wisdom has certain functions in society, such as strengthening, defense, enforcement, consecration, inheritance, and so forth, where everything is applied in social life. Haviland mentions local wisdom has two main psychological and social functions (Haviland, 1990). The psychological function is to provide a sense of security and to keep the individual's worries away. He further theorizes that "... divine aid is, theoretically, available when all else fails." The truth of this theory has been contained in some contents of literature around the world. In the social function, changes in wisdom occur due to necessity and time. Moreover, Haviland (1990) asserts that internal demands, when faced with problems or friction with other tribes or nations that bring new and even foreign ideas, are often the cause of cultural change. Wisdom assists in navigating the interactions between humans and nonhumans, satisfying and deflating, and seeking and enduring (Lingling & Fen, 2021).

Functions of wisdom are reflected in many ways. Among them is the perseverance of ancient beliefs and ritual forms. For example, when conserving herbs around the Khong River in the Thai Northeast community, these herbs are believed to cure several illnesses (Hongsawong, 2011). Another example is reliving the abandonment of ancient or historical place names (Gunawan & Djaenuderadjat, 2010). Hence, local wisdom is stored in traditional sources such as people's songs, poetry, fiction prose, and others. Therefore, learning a traditional language reveals both the speaker's personality and the worth of local knowledge or wisdom (Lubis, 2019). It is also reflected in the habits of the community and manifests in various forms that live, grow, and develop continuously in society. It functions in regulating social life, from sacred things to the profane.

Pornpanarom (2005) examines the relationship between local wisdom by way of life and resource management from four literary genres (i.e., *nirat* or traditional Thai poetry), documentary work, short stories, and novels) found that the pattern of the citizen of Thai life is reflected in the economic system and livelihoods, traditions, rituals and beliefs, and relationships within the family, community, and state. She further finds that literary works can effectively reflect systems of thinking, local wisdom, and management of their environmental resources. Literary works can educate the readers in a unique style (compared to academic ways of formal education). It is more emotional, imaginative, easier to understand, engaging, and attractive. Readers can gain knowledge and entertainment at the same time. Moreover, Tolasa and Chala also note how wisdom in proverbs can be the peace-making verbal communication principle to resolve conflict in Ethiopia (Tolasa & Chala, 2019). They continue by saying that lessons from proverbs, which contain traditional morsels of wisdom, consist of cultural value and rhetorical effectiveness to enforce reality in the context in which they are used.

2.2 Previous Related Works

Several research has been conducted by a number of researchers Wildan (2013), Wildan, Harun, and Safrida (2015), and Rismawati et al. (2018), to investigate the local wisdom embedded in novels, especially those written by Acehese novelists in Indonesia. However, those that focus on events during the political conflict and the 2004 earthquake

and tsunami that hit Aceh are still scarce. This is where this present research intends to fill in the gap. One related study is done by Koto (2002), particularly those relating to the decision-making process in the armed conflict in Aceh, such as the decision-making process about the area of military operations (DOM), by emphasizing the underlying historical background. He also studied the factors on which the DOM was based and the concerns accommodated in the DOM decision. Hence, his data were not based on literary works.

On the other hand, studies with data from literary work have been done by Wildan et al., (2015), who analyzes the local wisdom embedded in the novel of *Seulusoh*, written by an Acehese female author, D. Kemalawati. *Seulusoh* is a prayer for something in the body. For example, when a person is pierced by a thorn, he says the *seulusoh* prayer so that the thorn can easily get out of the body. This novel revealed various forms of local wisdom of the Acehese people. Furthermore, Wildan, Harun, and Safrida (2015) also analyze the historical facts encountered in *Perempuan Keumala* (Keumala Woman), written by Endang Moerdopo. The analyses comprise historical facts about (1) Keumalahayati (a woman admiral in the navy of the Aceh Sultanate in the 16th century, which ruled the area of today's modern Aceh Province, Sumatra, Indonesia), (2) historical events, and (3) places having historical stories. Using the new historicism analysis, this study describes Keumalahayati as a royal woman educated in the military academy. Several names that supported historical facts are Sultan Alaidin Riayat Syah, Cut Limpah, Alfonso, Sultan Muda, Cornelis de Houtman, and Frederick de Houtman. The novel is a historical novel, particularly one that describes the heroism of Keumalahayati. Another study by Rismawati et al. (2018) deals with women in Acehese novels of the 21st century. Her study revealed Acehese female characters specifically; the understanding and cultural values that underlie their attitudes in society. These studies indicated that Acehese women, through time, are depicted as great, resilient, patient, and faithful persons in any condition.

Nevertheless, cases of local wisdom in Indonesian literary works are still limited. There are some preliminary researches for discussion. For example, Istanti studies the local wisdom in Amir Hamzah's saga texts (Istanti, 2006). This study discusses the transformation of Amir Hamzah's text from the Malay literature to the Javanese literature, where some names were deviated to suit the wisdom of the Javanese culture. This study is more directed to the tradition of text decline. Then there is Hawasi (2007), who discussed the local wisdom in Javanese mystical literature. He concludes that Islam heavily influences the local wisdom in Javanese literature. Hence, Sufism which synergizes with the mystical values of Javanese leads to the thought of knowledge (*makrifat*), love, and ethics. The wisdom in Javanese mystical literature always talks about the relationship among man, God, society, and nature. These relationships are based on harmony and stability.

Meanwhile, another study by Gunawan is on traditional and modern literature (Gunawan & Djaenuderadjat, 2010). In mythology and folklore, he finds local wisdom as toponymic (the preservation of the names of places or elements of geography) showing local geographic and cultural awareness. Interestingly, he also pointed out the case of the tsunami in Aceh, where the concept of *ie beuna* (i.e., tsunami) is equivalently linked to the preparedness and level of understanding of the Acehese people in dealing with it. He suggested that mapping local genius should be done through the study of literary works.

Kasa (2011) investigates the local wisdom reflected in the Hindu philosophy in Bali known as *Tri Hita Karana* (three sources of life). This concept states that God, man, and nature are inseparable. Happiness and prosperity can only be achieved if all humans live in

balance and harmony with God, other humans, and the environment. Referring to the doctrine, the community members work together to build and implement environmental conservation programs such as Sacred Monkey Forests, *Umpek Kandang* (making offerings for monkeys and other animals), and *Tumpek Ngunduh* (plant offerings). Correspondingly, the philosophy from *tri hita karana* as one of the forms of local wisdom has been applied in environmental preservation to suppress climate change in Bali.

Culture refers to the distinctive characteristics of societies, which include many elements such as religion, language, flag, symbols, icons, and so on (Islam & Bozdağ, 2021). Due to its diverse form and life in various societal cultures, local wisdom has some functions. By taking the case of Bali, Astra (2004) mentions the function of local wisdom as a filter, sensor, and adapter to the immigrant culture. This applies to all aspects of life, such as bureaucracy, religion, building art, statue art, or inscription fragments. Astra (2004) adds that the influence of foreign culture, for example, in India, tends to 'globalize' and does not eliminate the local wisdom because it has functioned as internal or endogenous power. This draws the verity that local wisdom can select, filter, and accommodate external cultural influences that serve as external power. The domain of local wisdom is vast, ranging from the very theological function to the very pragmatic and technical function.

As a final point, previous studies have focused mainly on little data (i.e., based on a few literary works). Hence, this study intends to fill in the gap by investigating more work in one research, especially those written by Acehnese authors, and how they inculcate the forms of local wisdom into their novels.

3. METHOD

The present research employed the sociology of literature using qualitative methods (Segers, 2000). The research technique used was content analysis, in which texts are the data source. Neuman (2003) coins this technique as "...a technique for gathering and analyzing the content of the text. The content refers to words, meanings, pictures, symbols, ideas, themes, or any messages that can be communicated. The text is anything written, visual, or spoken that serves as a medium for communication." Similarly, Coser and Merton (1991) add that studies based on content analysis with documents used as a source of data, such as newspapers, literature, art, and personal documents, assist researchers in obtaining a deeper understanding of cultural values and social concerns of particular societies.

The texts used in this research were novels as the primary source. Initially, a number of 18 titles were studied. Hence, from this number, only nine novels were selected to be analyzed for this research. These novels are related to the issue of war and peace in Aceh, the war between the Indonesian government and the Free Aceh Movement (GAM). Furthermore, those that further touched on the issue of the earthquake and tsunami that hit Aceh in 2004 were also considered. Meanwhile, those that were not within these criteria were excluded. Finally, Acehnese novelists' selected novels from 2005-2011 are shown in Table 1.

Table 1

List of novels of Acehese novelists published from 2005 to 2011

Year	Title	Author	Publisher
2005	<i>Percikan Darah di Bunga</i> (Blood Drops on Flowers)	Arafat Nur	Jakarta: Zikrul Remaja
2006	<i>Tungku</i> (Furnace)	Salman Yoga S	Banda Aceh: Aneuk Mulieng Publishing
2008	<i>Bidadari Hitam</i> (Black Angel)	T. I. Thamrin	Jakarta: Imparsial & AJMI
2009	<i>Teuntra Atom</i> (Atomic Soldiers)	Thayeb Loh Angen	Banda Aceh: CAJP
2010	<i>El-Mansiya (Yang Terlupakan)</i> (The Forgotten)	Zack Aria	Banda Aceh: Pede Grafika
2010	<i>Burung Rantau Pulang ke Sarang</i> (Wandering Birds Returning to Their Nest)	Teuku Azhari Ibrahim	Banda Aceh: Bandar Publishing
2011	<i>Putroe Neng</i> (Putroe Neng)	Ayi Jufridar	Jakarta: Grasindo
2011	<i>Lampuki</i> (Lampuki)	Arafat Nur	Jakarta: Serambi Ilmu Semesta
2011	<i>Marwah di Ujung Bara</i> (Dignity at the Tip of the Ender)	R. H. Fitriadi	Yogyakarta: ProBooks

Each of the novels was carefully read. Any reference to local wisdom as the data for this research was noted for further analysis. Thematic analysis was used in scrutinizing the data. Since this research required understanding and collecting diverse aspects from data, thematic analysis was deemed appropriate in providing an opportunity to work out the potential of any emerging issue more widely (Marks & Yardley, 2004). This technique detected classifications and emerging themes (patterns) related to the data (Namey, Guest, Thairu, & Johnson, 2008). Then, illustrations of data on local wisdom in great detail and dealing with diverse subjects via interpretations were made (Boyatzis, 1998). Finally, conceptual coherence and consistency were built to explore the validity of the findings so that they fit the theoretical framework of the study (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2018).

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on data analysis, it was revealed that the forms of local wisdom incorporated in the selected novels by Acehese novelists are (1) the belief in myths, (2) the preservation of historical values, (3) the safeguarding of traditional houses, and (4) the practice of greetings and nobility. The following subsections elaborate on these findings.

4.1 Belief in Myths

Four novels from the nine analyzed for this study reflect myths, namely *Percikan Darah di Bunga*, *Tungku*, *Bidadari Hitam*, and *Teuntra Atom*. In the *Percikan Darah di Bunga* novel, there is wisdom in reading or interpreting natural signs that a disaster or something dangerous or terrible is to happen. The markers from nature in this novel are shown in the following excerpt:

E1 "...Meulu belum juga tidur. Ia sulit memejamkan mata, apalagi setelah terdengar suara burung hantu di pohon mangga belakang. Suara itu mengingatkannya pada peristiwa mistis menyeramkan. Hatinya semakin gelisah ketika suara burung hantu itu beralih ke pohon randu samping rumah. Suara itu bagai petanda buruk. Menurut kepercayaan orang-orang kampung,

burung hantu yang bersuara di sekitar rumah akan membawa malapetaka. Apalagi jika burung itu bertengger di atas tampong rumah, diyakini ada yang meninggal di rumah itu, atau setidaknya pemilik rumah mendapatkan bencana.” [...Meulu hasn't slept yet. She had a hard time closing her eyes, especially after the sound of an owl in the mango tree behind her. The sound reminded her of a sinister mystical event. Her heart became more and more restless when the owl's sound shifted to the white cotton tree next to the house. The sound sounded like a bad sign. According to the beliefs of the villagers, an owl's sound or cry around the house will bring disaster. Moreover, if the bird is perched on the house, it is believed that someone died in the house, or the owner of the house will face a tragedy.]

“Bulu halus di kuduk Meulu merinding. Angin malam itu bertiup dingin. Tiba-tiba terdengar lolongan anjing. Gadis itu semakin ketakutan dengan khayal sendiri. Perlahan-lahan dia menggeser duduk mendekati ibunya yang terlelap.” [Meulu's neck got goosebumps. The night wind was blowing cold. Suddenly a dog's howl was heard. The girl was getting more and more frightened by her own imagination. Slowly she shifted sitting closer to her sleeping mother.]

Source: Percikan Darah Bunga by (Nur, 2005: 38–40)

In E1, it is reflected that the Acehnese believed the sound or cry of an owl is a sign of impending death, sickness, or other misfortunes. The negative perception about an owl is generally believed by Acehnese. In many parts of the world, owls have been associated with death and misfortune (Geniusz, 2012; Nengovhela, 2010). This is perhaps due to their nocturnal activity and common screeching call. However, owls have also been associated with wisdom and prosperity as a result of frequently being companion animals for goddesses. This is such in Greek mythology; Silova (2018) explains that the owl was often associated with their goddess Athena, a goddess who often appeared in the form of an owl. She is known as a goddess of wisdom, arts, and skills; therefore, owls are perceived positively. Meanwhile, in the Indian culture, a white owl is considered a companion of the goddess of wealth and, therefore, a sign of prosperity.

Another example can be seen in *Bidadari Hitam*. Local wisdom about a flock of flying hornbills is reflected in the following excerpt:

E2 “..., Mak Santan menunjuk ... ke kawanan unggas yang terbang ke arah hutan di seberang sungai yang mereka sebut Krueng Aceh. Sayap-sayap enggang mengepak perlahan. namun rengkuhannya kuat. Anak-anak ramai mengomentari.” [..., Mak Santan pointed ... to a flock of flying hornbills going towards the forest across the river, which they call Krueng Aceh. The wings of the hornbills flapped slowly, but their grips are strong. Many children commented (on that).]

“Ini pertanda apa, Mak?” tanya Alya, cucunya yang cerdas, kritis dan ingin banyak tahu itu.” ... [“What is this sign, (Grand)ma?” asked Alya, her granddaughter, who is intelligent, critical, and wants to know a lot about things. ...]

Source: *Bidadari Hitam* by (Thamrin, 2008: 2)

The same case can be seen at the end of the novel, on page 233 of the novel:

E3 “Ia ... berdoa, tapi matanya terbentur pada iring-iringan burung putih –yang belum pernah dilihatnya dan tak tahu namanya—terbang dari arah laut ke darat. Mereka membentuk ‘barisan’ seperti arit. Ia lalu ingat iring-iringan enggang di atas rumah Mak Santan yang terbang ke arah Krueng Aceh, sehingga ia, Fitriah, dan Ahya bertanya, ‘itu pertanda apa, Mak? Mungkin kampung kita akan tertimpa sesuatu musibah?’ [“He . . . prayed, but his eyes met with a procession of white birds – which he had never seen and did not know the name of – flying from sea to land. They form a ‘row’ like a sickle. He then remembered the procession of hornbills above Mak Santan's house flying towards Krueng Aceh, so he, Fitriah, and Ahya asked, ‘What sign is that, Mak? Will our village will be hit by a disaster?’]

Source: *Bidadari Hitam* by (Thamrin, 2008: 233)

Shortly after the chapter, another character in the story, Inong, became a witness to the tsunami wave that came and hit Lhoknga beach in Aceh. Before that, she saw the tide recede after the big earthquake that Sunday morning. Then she saw brownish-black waves as high as mountains stranding the ships that were docked at the Lhoknga port and witnessed those waves rolling up all the buildings they hit. Thus, the novel has noted the existence of the flying hornbills from the sea to land as a belief to the Acehese that a natural phenomenon is about to happen. This wisdom shows that their local geographic and cultural awareness also helps them prepare for and understand disasters and how to deal with them (Gunawan & Djaenuderadjat, 2010). Similarly, the people in Cangkringan, Yogyakarta, Indonesia, also believed that the flight of birds in large numbers down to the place of human settlements was among the signs of the Merapi mountain eruption on November 10, 2010 (Permana, Setyowati, Slamet, & Juhadi, 2016). In the novel, the parents still ask their children not to interpret the incident as a coming disaster, but still, it is a sign to be aware of it.

Tungku (Yoga S., 2006) described the condition of Acehese society and used all signs of nature in looking for an escape (i.e., from natural disasters), good days, or myths about abstinence. The concepts of removing traces, possible hiding places, and believing in a shaman's predictions are told in the novel.

E4 “... keterangan yang diberikan ... tentang nama dan ciri-ciri tempat-tempat yang kemungkinan dapat dijadikan Gegur sebagai tempat singgah dan berteduh. ... menyangkut nama mempunyai kemiringan lebih daripada kemiringan gantungan foto. Gua ... yang memiliki kedalaman satu meter atau lebih. Batang pohon kayu besar yang mempunyai cabang tiga atau cabang empat seperti rentangan tangan, serta lembah-lembah gunung yang memiliki kecuraman dengan aliran sungai kecil di dasarnya.” [...the information given...regarding the names and characteristics of places that could possibly be used by Gegur as a place to stop and take shelter. ... is tilted more than the tilted photo on the wall. Caves...one meter or more deep. Trunks of large wooden trees that have three or four branches like the span of an arm, as well as mountain valleys that have steepness with small streams at the bottom.]

Source: *Tungku* by (Yoga S., 2006: 107)

In E4, the tilted photograph on the wall showed a hiding place for the character, Gegur, to go to. Moreover, as illustrated in the drawing, these places are caves deep into the forest or mountain valleys with small streams at the bottom. The novel *Burung Rantau Pulang ke Sarang* shows the efforts to maintain traditional values. This novel implies that the Acehese whole-heartedly protect their customs within Islamic nuances, similar to the Javanese's local wisdom (Hawasi, 2007). An example in the Acehese novels is the tradition of *peusijuek* which is translated as a customary cooling (Hurgronje, 1906; Yusuf & Yusuf, 2014). It is carried out by sprinkling water on the object believed to house spirits to repel any evil powers the Acehese perceives as “hot” (e.g., evil spirits, an angry person, etc.).

Several leaves, such as betel-nut stalks or wheat stalks, are tied together. The water is then mixed with a few drops of citrus fruit juice, and small pieces of flowers (such as jasmine, orchid, ylang-ylang, and so on) are placed in a small bowl with a handful of rice husks. Sometimes, *beuleukat*, yellow or white gelatinous rice eaten with the sweetened, ground, and cooked coconut, is placed on a different tray to supplement *peusijuek* ceremonies (Yusuf & Yusuf, 2014). The performer of the ceremony is to recite some verses from the Qur'an and prayers to Allah. The ceremony of *peusijuek* is done to people or family

members who go on the pilgrimage, at weddings, baby showers, a new house, a new car, soldiers leaving for war, cutting down old trees, and many others.

Various studies show that myths always appear in various social activities, especially socio-religious or traditional societies (Keas, 2021; Pranata, Wijoyo, & Suharyanto, 2021; Triana, Kustati, Nelmawarni, & Reffinaldi, 2022; Yulia & Okwita, 2017). Wildan (2013) further finds that most people are surrounded by myths that have sacred values for their adherents. The sacred value is used as a symbol of confirmation and authority. Pranata, Wijoyo, and Suharyanto (2021) examine the local wisdom of Pujawali to the Buddhist community in Lombok. They found that this custom and culture can unite the community's diversity. Even researchers see myths concerning religion, such as Keas (2021), who shows some science–religion myths function as part of a larger warfare narrative about science and religion. Meanwhile, in the Malay world, Yulia and Okwita (2017) study the Sugi society, describing how myths such as *'kemponan'*, *'bomoh'*, and *'santau'*, give meaning that is important to their cultural and social life. To end with, as asserted by Primayanti and Puspita regarding local wisdom in society, “people trust local values more than scientific explanations (Primayanti & Puspita, 2022).

4.2 Preservation of Historical Values

The inheritance of traditional values, as a manifestation of the local wisdom of the Acehnese, is such as the preservation of their historical values. The historical value is found in the *Putroe Neng*, *Teuntra Atom*, and *Lampuki* novels. For example, in a historical novel, the local wisdom in *Putroe Neng* appears right at the story's beginning. It is of the Acehnese practices that have experienced Middle Eastern influences, and among them is a typical Acehnese food influenced by Persia. Nevertheless, the influence does not hinder the Acehnese typical taste and spices in the food itself; the influence of foreign culture does not eliminate the local wisdom because the people can still select, filter, and adjust external cultural influences that serve as external power (Astra, 2004).

E5 “... *Lamuri juga mendatangkan empat tukang masak dari kerajaan Peureulak yang sudah khatam meracik bumbu untuk berbagai jenis masakan dari Persia dan Gujarat ...*” [... Lamuri also brought in four cooks from the Peureulak kingdom who had finished mixing spices for various types of dishes from Persia and Gujarat....]

Source: *Putroe Neng* by (Jufridar, 2011: 8)

The efforts in preserving the historical values in *Teuntra Atom* function as controllers for society. That means the next generation should not forget the struggle of the country's founders, such as preserving the existence of territorials. An example is the use of *mukim* and *sagoe* in Acehnese villages until today. *Mukim* is a level in a regional division based on the *Ulèebalang* feudal power. This system was applied during the time of the Aceh Sultanate from 1496-1903. *Ulèebalang* was the head of government in the Aceh sultanate who led an area or *sagoe*, which is now a district-level area within the current Indonesian government structure. Despite no more *Ulèebalang* in this era, a leader still leads a *mukim*. This is also found in *Lampuki*. In other words, the local wisdom on preserving historical values is a message to the next generations that they must also struggle to build a secure country for the prosperity of their society.

In line with the findings of this study, Pranata, Wijoyo, and Suharyanto (2021) also consider the history of Gajah Mada's journey from Java to Bali and then to Lombok via Carik

Port in Bayan, North Lombok Regency, as one of the local wisdom of the Buddhist community in Lombok. During the journey, it was mentioned that the governor of Gajah Mada and his entourage built small government offices in the areas visited. This shows that it follows the slogan in North Lombok, which says the people of North Lombok are especially 'brothers'; in other words, they are one big family.

Moreover, the doctrine of struggle is entailed within the Acehese historical values. This is illustrated in the *Tungku* novel. The power of deliberation is the regulator of actions by society. The novel shows how the community agrees to a deliberative institution in each family. This means that everything must be decided within the institution they have established and maintained for a long time in Aceh, which is known as the *Tungku*. In addition, the matters discussed in this institution are not only about this world but also the afterlife. The novel tells how the *Tungku* (Furnace) is implemented in a family meeting on law enforcement. The family leader's name is Anan. He has sought to impose a fair punishment on one of the family members based on the decision of the *Tungku* deliberations. Although the perpetrator is his family member, his own brother's son, with a heavy heart, he must be able to execute his nephew. He insists on applying the law fairly, and what has been determined in the deliberations must be conducted. The effort to enforce the law in this novel is as apparent as black and white; those who do wrong must be punished, regardless of whether the perpetrator is a rebellion from GAM (*Gerakan Aceh Merdeka* or the Aceh Free Movement) or a government's soldier from TNI (*Tentara Nasional Indonesia* or the Indonesian National Armed Forces). In the novels written during the armed conflict in Aceh. Koto (2002) and Wildan et al. (2015) find that the decision-making process is made by underlying historical background or experiences. Hence, the value of equity and equality of status, having regrets for mistakes, and the decision to establish even if the situation changes are part of the Acehese historical values that must be preserved.

Similar to the doctrine of struggle, this is also the case in Russia and Britain (Hammond, 2021; Mahal & Bura, 2020). Based on the socialist case in Russia, Hammond (2021) argues that social movements are how masses of oppressed people struggle for social change. Relatively powerless people can amass and accumulate power, challenge their subordination, and win concessions from or overthrow existing power structures. Meanwhile, Mahal and Bura's (2020) article explicitly describes the novel's contents, namely *Room at the Top*, written by John Braine. It is about the rise of an ambitious young man of humble origin and the socio-economic struggles in realizing his social ambitions in post-war Britain. Therefore, the doctrine of struggle in these novels is more directed to the youth, or the next generation, to improve their attitude as expected by their societies. Similarly, in the novels under study, the Acehese novelists provide hints of the Acehese local wisdom that aligns with their indigenous knowledge, culture, and religion to embed cultural identity in the readers, especially the Acehese youth.

4.3 Safeguarding Traditional Houses

Local wisdom in the novels studied is also reflected in safeguarding traditional houses. Wisdom in building architecture is not only in the beauty of the design but also in the values of local genius. For example, consider the following paragraph from a novel.

E6 "Ketika berada di jalan raya, yang memisahkan meunasah dengan setumpuk rumah penduduk, ia tertarik pada sebuah rumah berarsitektur Aceh yang tampak unik dan penuh ukiran bermotif daun. Berdiri menghadap kiblat di antara tiang-tiang jangkung setinggi sekitar dua meter,

seuramoe reunyeun (serambi depan) dan seuramoe likot (serambi belakang) mengapit ruang tengah yang terdiri dari dua kamar yang saling berhadapan dan dibatasi sebuah gang, di sebut rambat, yang sekaligus menghubungkan serambi depan dengan serambi belakang." [While on the main road, which separates the *meunasah* (i.e., a small mosque) from a row of people's houses, he is attracted to a house with Acehese architecture that looks unique and is full of carved leaf designs. Standing facing the *qiblat* (i.e., the direction of the *Ka'bah* (the sacred building at Mekkah), to which Muslims turn at prayer) between tall pillars about two meters high, *seuramoe reunyeun* (i.e., the front porch) and *seuramoe likot* (i.e., the back porch) flanking the living room which consists of two rooms facing each other and bounded by an alley, called *rambat*, which simultaneously connects the front porch with the back porch.]

Source: El-Mansiya by (Aria, 2010: 4)

E6 provides an overview of several things. First the unique form of Aceh's architecture with its leaf-patterned carvings on the traditional houses. This illustrates that in the art of carving, the Acehese people use the environment (i.e., plants and trees) as their source of inspiration for the designs. Novita et al. (2018) explain that Islam affects the designs and patterns of the wood-carving on houses. She continues by informing us that Islam forbids making shapes of living things because the Muslims believe that this act will be held accountable in the Hereafter (life after death). Therefore, those motifs are dominated by the natural surroundings, such as clouds, stars, mountains, curved lines, straight lines, geometry, and others, with flora motifs dominating the carvings inspired by plants that grow around the society. To some extent, the Balinese also use their philosophy of life sources in their local wisdom for environmental preservation (Kasa, 2011).

Second, the traditional Acehese house, called *rumoh Aceh*, is uniform in shape, namely a rectangle extending from east to west. This follows the direction of the *qiblat*, the direction of the *Ka'bah* (the sacred building at Mekkah), to which Muslims turn at prayers. This is a symbol of the religiosity of the Acehese. Herman (2018) highlights that the sides of the Acehese house always face towards the east and the west, with one side facing the *Ka'bah*.

Therefore, whoever visits an Acehese traditional house, the guests no longer need to ask for the *qiblat's* direction. The design of having one side of the house face west is also for safety. In Aceh, the strong winds often blow between the two directions; if not from the west, it comes from the east. Therefore, having the sides of the Aceh facing these directions strengthens its position on the ground.

Third, the building is designed with poles two meters high, which signifies local wisdom as a disaster area, for both earthquakes, and floods. This finding is relevant to the study by Izziah et al. (2020) on the existence of traditional houses in Aceh that reveal local experiences, wisdom, and expertise. They found that constructing a conventional house is a responsive architectural construct toward hot climates and earthquakes. This architectural building type with the local wisdom value's involvement is worthy of being applied and adapted in modern life. The traditional Acehese houses are known to survive earthquakes that frequently hit the region.

4.4 The Practice of Greetings and Nobility

Another dominant local wisdom in the Acehese novels is the practice of greetings and nobility. This wisdom is predominantly found in *Burung Rantau Pulang ke Sarang*, *Teuntra Atom*, *Marwah di Ujung Bara*, and *El-Mansiya*. The greeting is a part of the

language; language does not merely act as a means of communication but also carries social position (Poorghorban, 2021).

The effort to preserve the tradition of greeting and nobility in Burung Rantau Pulang ke Sarang is oriented to the Acehese education, the *dayah* education. *Dayah*, or *pesantren*, is described as a religious, educational institution. Besides teaching studies on the Acehese's religion, Islam, it also teaches important traditions of martial arts activities (i.e., *silat*) and *Silat* artistic activities with various traditional musical instruments. The novel depicts how students should greet their teachers (called *Teungku*, *Abu*, or *Abu Chik*) and how they should greet themselves as students (called *Adun*, *Adun Manyang*, *Tengku*, and *Akak*). In *Teuntra Atom*, this greeting emphasizes the existence of a typical office of the members of a religious community, such as *wali neugara*, a village midwife, etc. In line with this, in the Vietnamese culture, for example, Nguyen and Khac (2021) reveal that greetings were also highly respected. After the wars in Vietnam, being invited to enjoy a big meal is also one of the greeting cultures in Vietnam. Again, local wisdom is the values believed to be true and performed by the community (Ridwan, 2007). In this case, greetings are another form of behavior that reflects the identities and culture of a community.

In the novel *Marwah di Ujung Bara*, the author, T. I. Thamrin, also portrayed the existence of the Acehese society's noble titles (i.e., *Teuku*, *Cut*, etc.). This novel, in which the author himself holds a noble title in the Acehese community, stresses the importance of preserving the status.

E7 “*Hampir menjadi kewajiban adat, seorang bergelar ‘Cut’ seharusnya menikah dengan seorang Teuku agar ras keturunannya terjaga. Maka, tak sedikit anak-anak Teuku, anak-anak Ampon, berlomba-lomba melamar Cut Halimah, begitulah nama ibu Meurah, untuk dijadikan istri.*” [Almost a customary obligation, a person with the title ‘Cut’ should marry a man with the title Teuku so that the noble descent is maintained. So, not a few sons of Teuku, sons of Ampon, competed to ask Cut Halimah’s hand for marriage, that was the name of Meurah’s mother to be a wife.]

Source: Burung Rantau Pulang ke Sarang by (Ibrahim, 2010, pp. 339–340)

This tradition is also portrayed in *El-Mansiya*, which concerns matchmaking, especially those done with close relatives. Social status, ancestry, and caste often become a condition for determining a life partner (Fahriati, 2018). Even, in reality, that tradition often occurs in Aceh. On the other hand, nowadays, people can accept new family members from distant relatives, even from regions, tribes, and other countries. This is common because changes in wisdom can occur due to necessity and time (Haviland, 1990). However, in this novel, the tradition is preserved especially among noble families with titles of *Said*, *Teuku*, *Syarifah*, *Cut*, and *Aja*. Throughout history, the administration’s policy of nobility tended to control upper society to create a social base that would support and promote the imperial policy (Gherasim, 2017). Commonly, upper social classes impose certain codes on the lower social classes to display ascendancy (Poorghorban, 2021). Despite many societies no longer having administrations under the nobility ruling; hence Mayhall notes that novels such as these can help preserve the continuing relevance of nobility to uphold society (Mayhall, 2021).

Another tradition in this novel is the local wisdom of dowry for the daughter who will marry. To the Acehese culture, the amount of dowry reflects self-esteem or family honor. The amount of the dowry is determined based on lineage, social status, and families’ previous experiences. Even the first daughter becomes the benchmark of dowry for her

younger sister later. In this novel, the efforts to maintain this value and custom remain prominent.

Based on the results explained in this section, the data from nine selected novels written by Acehese novelists and published between the years 2005-2011 showed that the local wisdom presented by the novelists to be categorized into four themes. In believing in myths, examples presented in the novels are such as an owl's cry, sudden receding tide of the ocean, and tilted photographs. These signs of nature bear meaning to the Acehese which indicate cues that a disaster or a tragedy is about to happen. In preserving historical values, traditional food, existence of territorials, and power of deliberation by society are among the illustrations demonstrated in the novels. In safeguarding traditional houses, the Aceh's architecture in carving, shape and structure are illuminated by the novelists. Finally, practicing greetings are typified through the practice in *dayah* education, and nobility are preserved by family names and marriage traditions.

The wisdom presented in these novels also serves as a source of encouragement and inspiration for readers to learn about Acehese culture. The novelists discursively transmit this information to future generations through their works, particularly Acehese, on how local knowledge, culture, and religion influence cultural identity and signify the ideals of local genius. These wisdoms contribute to determining the course of society's life. To create a robust and cohesive society, these pearls of wisdom address many aspects of life.

5. CONCLUSION

This study has revealed several local wisdom as believed and practiced by the Acehese society through nine novels written by Acehese novelists published in the years between 2005-2011. These pearls of local wisdom cover all sides of life to support a strong and bonded community. The local wisdom was divided into four themes: the belief in myths, the preservation of historical values, the safeguarding of traditional houses, and the practice of greetings and nobility.

First is the belief in myths; the novels portrayed Acehese beliefs, such as the sound or cry of an owl signifies impending death, sickness, or other misfortunes. Then the existence of the flying hornbills from the sea to land is believed to be a sign that a natural phenomenon or disaster is about to happen. The Acehese also uses all signs of nature to seek an escape (i.e., from natural disasters), good days, or myths about abstinence. The novels also illustrated the traditional ceremony of *peusijuek*, or a customary "cooling" conducted on people who are about to leave on a journey or work, start a new life or newborns, have celebrations, and even cut down old trees. The second is in preserving historical values and the doctrine of struggle; the novels illustrated some of the Acehese practices based on its trace tough time. Some examples are the food much influenced by Middle Eastern areas, especially Persia. Then there is preserving the existence of local territorials (i.e., *mukim*, *sago*, etc.) to appreciate the struggle of the country's founders. The *Tungku*, a deliberative institution of society, is also defined in the works of the Acehese novelist. The third is safeguarding traditional houses and how people still build them, especially in rural areas. Finally, fourth is the practice of greetings and nobility. The efforts to preserve the tradition of greeting other people with kinship terms are maintained in the novels, such as for teachers (i.e., *Teungku*, *Abu*, and *Abu Chik*) among peers (i.e., *Adun*, *Adun Manyang*, *Tengku*, and *Akak*) and leading members of the community, such as *keuchiek*, *camat*, *uleebalang*, *wali neugara*, etc. Furthermore, in nobility, the novels

emphasize upholding the social status of the society by preserving noble titles such as Teuku, Cut, Said, Syarifah, and Aja. The amount of dowry for daughters who will marry also reflects the self-esteem or honor of their family.

To end, the results of this study show that Acehese novelists have a role in expressing and preserving the socio-cultural conditions of the Acehese people, especially regarding the points of local wisdom, in their works. Although this study has reached its aim, thus some limitations are put forward and expected to be resolved by researchers interested in conducting similar research in the future. This study focused on novels written by Acehese novelists. Thus, in the future, researchers can also consider exploring local wisdom through the lens of other Acehese literary works, such as traditional or contemporary song lyrics, poetry, drama, and even folktales.

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Authors' Contribution

Wildan conceived and designed the analysis, collected the data, wrote the manuscript. Yunisrina Qismullah Yusuf analyzed the data and translated the manuscript. Budi Arianto collaborated in collected the data, performed the analysis, and Rajab Bahry proofread the manuscript.

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