

Cultural Continuity and Legal Adaptation: The Evolution of *Suluh* in Aceh's Conflict Resolution System

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Abstract: This article examines the concept of *Suluh* as a culturally grounded model of conflict resolution in Acehnese society, analyzed through both historical developments and normative Islamic frameworks. The study aims to analyze the function and legitimacy of *Suluh* in resolving social disputes at the community level. Employing a qualitative approach, it integrates library research and fieldwork, including direct observation and interviews in Banda Aceh, South Aceh, and North Aceh. The findings reveal that *Suluh* serves as a culturally embedded mechanism for peaceful conflict resolution, historically rooted in Aceh's traditional governance systems since the kingdom era. Normatively, it is legitimized through references in Islamic sources such as the Qur'an and Hadith. In contemporary practice, *Suluh* is institutionalized through *Qanun Gampong* (village regulations), enabling its formal role in village-level dispute resolution. This study contributes to the discourse on localized conflict resolution models by highlighting the relevance of indigenous mechanisms like *Suluh* for integration into broader legal and social frameworks.

Keywords: *Suluh*; Conflict Resolution; Acehnese Customary Law; Legal Adaptation; Islamic Norms.

Introduction

Conflict resolution constitutes a fundamental aspect of social governance within Acehnese society, which operates under a plural legal system encompassing customary law, Islamic law, and state law (Ramli et al., 2024). Within this legal pluralism, traditional mechanisms such as *Suluh* have historically played a central role in maintaining social harmony at the grassroots level (Matsyah, 2017). *Suluh* is not merely a tool for community-based mediation; it reflects a deep integration of indigenous social norms and spiritual values rooted in both *adat* (customary law) and Islamic teachings (Abd. Aziz, 2018; Hoesin, 1970). Its procedural flexibility, reliance on moral persuasion, and emphasis on communal reconciliation have rendered it particularly adaptive to the local socio-cultural context (Rahmania et al., 2022; Srimulyani et al., 2018). However, despite its cultural embeddedness, *Suluh* remains under-examined in academic discourse, often overshadowed by more formal or codified legal instruments.

In recent decades, Acehnese society has undergone significant socio-political transformations. Urbanization, globalization, and the increasing reach of the state legal apparatus have disrupted traditional structures and introduced normative tensions into the legal order. These changes have not only challenged the relevance of customary institutions like *Suluh*, but also raised questions regarding their legitimacy, efficacy, and compatibility with formal legal systems (Rahman, 2025). As legal formalism becomes increasingly dominant, *Suluh* faces marginalization, both in practice and in public policy. This evolving context necessitates a critical reassessment of *Suluh*'s function as a resilient, community-driven mechanism

of conflict resolution – particularly in terms of its adaptability, normative grounding, and institutional recognition within the plural legal landscape of contemporary Aceh.

Numerous studies have demonstrated that conflict resolution in Acehnese society is deeply rooted in customary mechanisms infused with Islamic values. M. Kasim and Nurdin (2020), along with Manullang et al. (2024), assert that Acehnese customary law is firmly grounded in Islamic principles, while Matondang et al. (2024) underscores the vital role of ulama in addressing human rights violations through Aceh's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). Within the framework of legal pluralism, Ramli et al. (2024) highlight how minor disputes in Aceh are resolved through the dynamic interaction between state law, customary institutions, and Islamic law – revealing a layered and complementary legal system. Institutional dynamics have also drawn scholarly attention. Mawar and Iqbal (2025) analyze dispute resolution before and after the enactment of Qanun No. 10 of 2008, while Ibrahim (2020) and Ridwansyah et al. (2022) critique the limited efficacy of the Wali Nanggroe Institution in resolving both local and institutional conflicts. At the grassroots level, Miranti et al. (2022) and Nurdin et al. (2023) document the role of adat courts and traditional leaders in settling family and marital disputes. Marlina and Mulyadi (2024) further emphasize the application of restorative justice in gampong communities as a bottom-up approach to protecting children in conflict with the law. Broader analyses by Zainal et al. (2024), Lee (2020), and Sari et al. (2023) explore Aceh's post-conflict landscape, including ecological concerns and the sustainability of peace. Comparative perspectives from other regions – such as Syafei et al. (2023) in Tanjung Pinang, Effendi and Putra (2022) on general adat-based mechanisms, and Haq et al. (2024) on the Kalosara system in Southeast Sulawesi – enrich the national discourse on customary conflict resolution. Despite this growing body of scholarship, a significant gap remains: no study has systematically explored both the historical foundations of *Suluh* and its normative articulation within Islamic legal theory and customary law. Addressing this lacuna constitutes the central aim of the present study.

This research aims to examine *Suluh* as a conflict resolution mechanism in Acehnese society through two principal dimensions: the historical and the normative. The historical dimension traces the origins and institutional evolution of *Suluh* from the era of the Acehnese sultanates to the post-reformation period, highlighting its role as a persistent social institution. The normative dimension explores the legal legitimacy of *Suluh* within the framework of Islamic jurisprudence and its integration with Acehnese customary law, positioning it as a system grounded in both religious and indigenous legal traditions. In addition, the study maps the contemporary practice of *Suluh* within Aceh's socio-cultural fabric, including its interface with formal state legal structures. The significance of this study lies in its contribution to a deeper understanding of community-based conflict resolution mechanisms as legal entities with functional relevance, historical continuity, and normative legitimacy. By constructing a historical narrative and elucidating the legal foundations of *Suluh*, this article proposes a new analytical framework that repositions customary institutions as forms of living law, meriting integration into national and international legal discourses. The findings are expected to enrich academic debates on legal pluralism and to support the formal recognition of community-based conflict resolution mechanisms within judicial and policy frameworks in Indonesia.

Literature Review

The study of conflict resolution within Islamic and indigenous frameworks has drawn increasing scholarly attention, particularly in post-conflict societies such as Aceh. This section outlines relevant academic contributions on three major themes: indigenous dispute resolution mechanisms, Islamic legal foundations of reconciliation, and legal pluralism in Indonesia.

Indigenous Dispute Resolution and Restorative Justice

Indigenous mechanisms of dispute resolution, often rooted in local customs and community norms, are widely recognized for their restorative character. Scholars such as John Paul Lederach (1997) and Howard Zehr (2008) emphasize the value of community-based peacebuilding in societies with strong cultural ties, where resolution is not solely about legal judgment but also about restoring social harmony.

In the Acehnese context, *Suluh* exemplifies this principle by prioritizing reconciliation (*peudame*), communal healing (*kenduri*), and symbolic acts of forgiveness (*peumat jaro*). While such practices have been historically dismissed as “unofficial” or “non-state” mechanisms, recent literature advocates for the integration of customary institutions within formal legal systems (LeBaron, 2002). Studies on indigenous justice in Southeast Asia (e.g., Tan, 2008) also highlight how cultural legitimacy can foster higher compliance and sustainability of conflict outcomes.

Islamic Legal Foundations of Reconciliation (*Islah*)

From a normative Islamic perspective, the concept of *islah* (reconciliation) is deeply rooted in the Qur'an and Hadith. Verses such as Qur'an 49:9 emphasize the obligation to make peace among believers, while commentators like Wahbah al-Zuhaili (1991) and Hasbi Ash-Shiddieqy (Kosasih et al., 2024) interpret *islah* not merely as conflict avoidance but as a moral duty to restore justice and social cohesion. These interpretations support the premise that mechanisms like *Suluh* are not only culturally relevant but also theologically grounded in Islamic jurisprudence. Contemporary Islamic legal scholarship further introduces the principles of *maslahah* (public interest) and *adl* (justice) as foundational to alternative conflict resolution. Scholars such as Kamali (2008) and Hallaq (2009) advocate for a contextual reading of Islamic law, emphasizing reconciliation over retribution when social harmony is at stake.

Legal Pluralism in Indonesia

Indonesia's legal system is a paradigmatic example of legal pluralism, where state law (positive law), Islamic law, and customary law (*adat*) coexist. In Aceh, this pluralism is particularly pronounced due to its special autonomous status and the enactment of regional *Qanun* that formalize the role of local institutions in governance, including dispute resolution. In the case of Aceh, research by Manfarisyah (2016) and Nurdin (2013) demonstrates how *Suluh* operates within these overlapping systems, often serving as an effective alternative to formal adjudication. However, there remains a need for deeper exploration into how such indigenous-Islamic mechanisms can be harmonized with national legal frameworks without being subordinated or marginalized.

Method

This research employs a descriptive-analytical method that integrates library and field research through a normative and historical approach. The normative approach refers to the analysis of Islamic legal sources such as the Qur'an, Hadith, and the views of authoritative scholars to conceptualize *Suluh* as a mechanism of conflict resolution in Islamic law. The historical approach, distinctively grounded in Islamic historiography, explores the historical trajectory of the *Suluh* concept and its contextual application within Acehnese society. Data collection techniques include library research, document analysis, and field interviews with key informants such as traditional leaders, *Suluh* practitioners, and local government officials involved in community-level conflict mediation. Additional data were obtained from institutional libraries and local customary institutions in Acehnese villages. The fieldwork was conducted in three purposively selected *gampongs*: Gampong Ceurih (Banda Aceh City), Gampong Meunasah Kota (North Aceh Regency), and Gampong Labuhan Tarok (South Aceh Regency), representing diverse socio-cultural contexts in which *Suluh* is actively practiced.

Results and Discussion

The Historical Roots of *Suluh* in Acehnese Customary Practice: Continuity and Transformation

One of the most distinctive features of Aceh's legal cultural heritage is its customary conflict resolution mechanism known as *Suluh* (Abbas, 2009). This mechanism has existed since the era of the Aceh Sultanate as a form of social mediation rooted deeply in Islamic values and local traditions. However, its implementation has experienced fluctuations, particularly following the enactment of Law No. 5 of 1979 on Village Governance, which effectively dismantled customary legal structures and replaced local

nomenclature such as *Gampong* with “Village” or “Sub-district”. As a result, customary law and traditional conflict resolution mechanisms such as *Suluh* were marginalized and stagnated.

Historically, the enforcement of Law No. 5/1979 is seen as a period during which customary law in Aceh entered a state of “suspended animation.” Conflict resolution shifted entirely to the formal legal system—via police and courts—which often failed to resolve disputes holistically or overlooked them altogether if not formally reported. This shift alienated communities from participatory and culturally familiar conflict resolution mechanisms they had previously relied upon.

The revival of customary law and local wisdom in Aceh began during the Reformasi era, marked by the promulgation of Law No. 44 of 1999 concerning the Special Autonomy of the Province of Aceh. Article 3(2) of the law delineates four pillars of Aceh’s special autonomy: religious life, customary life, education, and the role of *ulama* in regional policy-making (Undang-Undang Penyelenggaraan Keistimewaan Propinsi Daerah Istimewa Aceh Nomor 44, 1999). This statute became the normative foundation for efforts to revitalize indigenous mechanisms such as *Suluh*.

To further strengthen the role of customary law at the local level, the Aceh Government enacted Qanun No. 5 of 2003 on *Gampong* Governance. This *Qanun* grants *Gampong* the authority to resolve customary disputes, as stipulated in Article 4(f). Subsequently, following the signing of the 2005 Helsinki MoU (Matsyah, 2017), Law No. 11 of 2006 on Aceh Governance (UUPA) was issued, reaffirming the legal status of traditional institutions in Aceh. This was followed by Qanun No. 9 and No. 10 of 2008, regulating the development of customary life and the institutionalization of customary bodies, respectively.

This study finds that the implementation of *Suluh* is carried out through the active involvement of the *Lembaga Adat Gampong* (*Gampong* Customary Institution), which comprises various community figures such as the *keuchik* (village head), *imeum meunasah* (mosque leader), *tuha peut* (village council), and other customary actors within a formal structure as delineated in Qanun No. 10 of 2008. Among the central figures in the execution of *Suluh* is the *Ureung Tuha Gampong*, not merely an elder in terms of age, but one regarded as wise, knowledgeable in customary norms, and respected within the community. The local expression “*Ureung Tuha yang turi dro, Ureung Tuha yang tuho*” emphasizes that social maturity and wisdom—rather than age alone—are the primary qualifications.

Furthermore, Qanun No. 9 of 2008 identifies at least 18 types of social conflicts eligible for resolution through *Suluh*, including disputes within households; conflicts between families related to *faraid* (inheritance); disputes among residents; *khalwat meusum* (public indecency during certain periods); disputes over property rights; theft within families; conflicts over common property; minor theft; livestock theft; violations of customs related to livestock, agriculture, and forests; sea disputes; market disputes; minor abuses; forest arson; harassment, slander, incitement, and defamation; environmental pollution; threats; and other disputes that violate local customs. Resolutions are reached through deliberative and participatory processes grounded in familial bonds, collective mediation, and context-sensitive Islamic values. In practice, some *Gampong* have even formulated their own local *Qanun Gampong*, serving as adaptive legal guidelines tailored to the unique social dynamics of each community.

The findings underscore that *Suluh* functions as a socially relevant and effective reconciliation instrument at the grassroots level in Aceh. Its revitalization not only breathes life into customary law but also reinforces local identity and reduces dependence on formal legal systems, which are often perceived as repressive or inaccessible.

The resurgence of *Suluh* as a conflict resolution mechanism is inseparable from the strategic roles played by both formal and informal local actors. The *keuchik* serves as the initial recipient of complaints or conflict reports, while the *imeum meunasah* offers religious and moral guidance by injecting Islamic values into the mediation process. The *tuha peut* and other customary leaders act as facilitators and mediators, fostering two-way communication between disputing parties. This synergy among customary, religious, and administrative structures defines the uniqueness of Aceh’s *Suluh*-based conflict resolution model.

In-depth interviews conducted in Banda Aceh, North Aceh, and South Aceh reveal that *Suluh* is often more effective in resolving disputes peacefully and comprehensively than formal litigation. Several

factors contribute to this effectiveness: (1) the emotional and social proximity between *Suluh* mediators and disputants; (2) the use of local language and cultural symbols that resonate with the community; (3) a resolution approach oriented not toward punishment but toward social healing (restorative justice); and (4) the high level of social recognition granted to decisions made by customary institutions.

Nevertheless, the implementation of *Suluh* faces both structural and cultural challenges. Structural obstacles include limited financial support, insufficient formal legal recognition of customary decisions, and a lack of training and regeneration of customary leaders who understand the values of *Suluh*. Cultural challenges arise from the erosion of local values due to modernization, urbanization, and the growing dominance of positive legal reasoning that positions customary law as subordinate. Several informants also noted a degree of resistance from younger generations who tend to dismiss customary resolutions as slow or unofficial.

Despite these challenges, there is a growing resurgence of trust in the *Suluh* mechanism, especially following the enactment of various *Qanun* that affirm the role of customary law. In some cases, community members voluntarily approach the *keuchik* or *tuha peut* to report disputes before considering formal legal avenues. In family-related conflicts – such as divorce or inheritance disputes – *Suluh* is often employed as the initial resolution mechanism, which, if successful, can prevent escalation to more complex legal conflicts.

This study affirms that *Suluh* is not merely a relic of traditional custom, but a legitimate system of conflict resolution that carries both social and spiritual legitimacy within Acehnese society. It embodies a localized form of restorative justice rooted in Islam and indigenous culture while serving as a bridge between state law and the needs of customary communities. The revitalization of *Suluh* in Aceh represents not only a sociocultural necessity but also a vital strategy in strengthening Indonesia's hybrid legal system that embraces legal pluralism.

***Islāh* as the Core of *Suluh*: A Normative Analysis of Peace and Reconciliation in Islamic Jurisprudence**

The normative approach in this study does not merely regard Islamic law as a set of textual rules but rather as a value system derived from the Qur'an and Hadith that is capable of responding to social dynamics. Within the context of conflict resolution in Acehnese society, the concept of *Suluh* stands as a normative instrument deeply rooted in Islamic teachings and enjoys strong social and cultural legitimacy. *Suluh*, known in Arabic as *Islāh*, refers to an effort of reconciliation or peace-making between disputing parties. This concept is not exclusive to individual conflicts but encompasses the entire spectrum of social, political, and religious disputes.

As Ibrahim Berdan (2008) explains, the scope of *Suluh* is not confined to any particular type or context of conflict. This is reinforced by the approach of *'Ulūm al-Qur'ān*, which advocates for the interpretation of religious texts based on their general meaning (*'umūm al-lafz*), rather than the specific circumstances of revelation (*khuṣūṣ al-sabab*). Through this hermeneutic lens, the injunctions to pursue reconciliation as stated in Qur'anic verses apply universally and are not restricted to particular historical events. Thus, *Suluh* functions not only as a legal instrument but also as an Islamic moral imperative that must be internalized by the community to preserve social harmony.

The Qur'an explicitly directs Muslims to act as agents of peace. Surah al-Hujurāt, verse 9, serves as a foundational verse for this normative construct. It states that when two groups of believers are in conflict, the obligation falls on a third party to mediate peace. If one party persists in wrongdoing, it must be confronted until it returns to Allah's command, after which peace should be established with justice. This text illustrates that conflict resolution in Islam is neither neutral nor passive but is an active and transformative process – one that not only demands cessation of violence but also the restoration of justice and social harmony.

Hasbi Ash-Shiddieqy (2000) interprets *Islāh* as a process of strengthening human relations fractured by conflict. In his exegesis, *Islāh* transcends pragmatic efforts to cease hostilities; it is a religious obligation that reflects the collective responsibility of the Muslim community to establish a just and peaceful social order. Thus, reconciliation becomes a profound form of social worship. Wahbah al-Zuhaylī (1998), in his

Tafsīr al-Munīr, expands this understanding by emphasizing that reconciliation is a moral and legal duty carried out impartially and justly, addressing the root causes of conflict. He outlines four stages in the implementation of *Suluh*: providing religious counsel to the disputants to return to Sharia, upholding justice in settlement, compensating for damages incurred, and restoring social relations through mutual forgiveness. Therefore, the *Suluh* process is not merely focused on achieving peace but also ensures that the resolution process is ethical and just.

In Acehnese society, the concept of *Suluh* exists not only within normative texts but also manifests in social practice passed down through generations. The presence of customary institutions such as *Tuha Peut* or *Imum Mukim*, along with the involvement of religious and customary leaders in mediating disputes, indicates that *Suluh* is an integral part of the local conflict resolution system. However, it is important to recognize that while the normative concept of *Suluh* is universal, its practice on the ground is often shaped by social structures, power relations, and the prevailing political context. This means that the implementation of *Suluh* can be variable and contextual, adapting to the particular characteristics of local communities.

With a strong normative foundation and adaptive social practice, *Suluh* holds significant potential to be revitalized as a conflict resolution mechanism that is not only Islamic in essence but also inclusive and relevant to contemporary societal challenges. Therefore, within the context of Aceh – a region rich in tradition and formal Islamic legal legitimacy – strengthening the concept of *Suluh* could serve as a just and sustainable model for conflict resolution.

Contemporary Practices of *Suluh* in Aceh: Community-Based Approaches to Conflict Resolution

The practice of *Suluh* in Aceh represents a living expression of indigenous Islamic jurisprudence that continues to shape how communities resolve conflict in a culturally meaningful and socially effective way. Far from being a peripheral or obsolete tradition, *Suluh* remains the primary mechanism through which Acehnese society manages disputes – whether interpersonal, familial, or intercommunal. Its enduring legitimacy lies not only in its historical roots but in its relevance to contemporary social dynamics and its alignment with the moral framework of Islamic law and local custom.

Observations and interviews conducted in three regions – Banda Aceh (central), Aceh Utara (eastern), and Aceh Selatan (western) – offer valuable insight into how *Suluh* is actively maintained and adapted to diverse local contexts. In Gampong Ceurih, Ulee Kareng, Banda Aceh, for example, conflict resolution is embedded within the religious and social fabric of the community. According to Tgk. Syarifuddin (Interview, 20 September 2019), all forms of conflict – whether internal or involving outsiders – are brought first to the *gampong* for resolution through *Suluh*, locally known as *peudame*. The mosque serves not only as a spiritual center but as a courtroom of conscience, where village leaders including the *Geuchik*, *Imum Chik*, *Tuha Peut*, and respected youth leaders convene to hear and mediate disputes. The process unfolds in a deeply dialogical manner, encouraging parties to speak openly, seek understanding, and find moral clarity. Resolution is ritualized through the *peumat jaro*, a symbolic handshake performed before the community as a sign of restored harmony. In cases involving physical violence, a *kenduri* or communal feast is held, the cost of which is borne by the disputing parties. This ritual underscores the seriousness of the breach and the collective desire for moral repair. A final communal prayer marks the closure of the process, binding the reconciliation not only in social but also in spiritual terms.

In Gampong Meunasah Panton Labu, Aceh Utara, the *Suluh* process retains similar features but exhibits a higher degree of institutionalization. According to Tgk. Hasballah and Tgk. Ilyas Hasyem (Interviews, 28 September 2019), the *meunasah* – the traditional village hall – functions as the formal venue for dispute settlement. When conflicts involve individuals from different *lorong* or neighborhood compounds, each is represented by its *Kepala Lorong*, ensuring that the resolution process reflects a balance of communal interests. Community leaders, youth representatives, and religious figures all participate in the mediation, fostering a deeply participatory environment. Notably, the resolution often includes the drafting and signing of a peace agreement, witnessed by those present. This integration of written

documentation with oral tradition reflects a subtle evolution in the practice, enhancing its social enforceability. As in Banda Aceh, reconciliation is affirmed through a communal handshake and meal, emphasizing forgiveness and reintegration into the moral community. Public apologies, delivered in front of all present, function as both personal confession and public commitment to behavioral change.

In Gampong Labuhan Tarok, Meukek, Aceh Selatan, the *Suluh* process is characterized by its simplicity and solemnity. As explained by youth representative Muhazar (Interview, 10 October 2019), disputes are often mediated at the *Geuchik*'s residence or in the mosque, depending on the nature of the conflict. When outsiders are involved, the process acquires heightened ritual gravity and is held at the mosque in the presence of leaders from both communities. Reconciliation is achieved through public reading and signing of a peace agreement, followed by open apologies and a communal meal. What distinguishes this locale is the strong emphasis on family and communal witnessing. The involvement of both families not only reinforces the authenticity of the reconciliation but also places the burden of enforcement on a broader social network. The ritual of eating together serves to dissolve residual hostility and reaffirm social bonds.

The practice of *Suluh* as a conflict resolution mechanism within Acehnese society reveals a deeply rooted form of community-based justice that remains vital and central to maintaining social harmony. Field data collected from three distinct regions—Banda Aceh, Aceh Utara, and Aceh Selatan—demonstrate that *Suluh* functions not merely as an informal dispute resolution tool but as a recognized social institution, systematically practiced and deeply embedded within Islamic and cultural values.

In each locality, the *Suluh* process is conducted in spaces endowed with symbolic and religious significance, such as the *meunasah* (village meeting hall) or mosque, facilitated by respected community leaders including the *Geuchik* (village head), *Imum Chik* (religious leader), *Tuha Peut* (traditional elders), youth leaders, and other local representatives. These actors do not simply serve as mediators but embody the social and moral fabric of the community. Thus, *Suluh* transcends administrative function, becoming a socially meaningful ritual. The power relations present within this process are primarily horizontal, reflecting collective communal will for peaceful and dignified resolution rather than vertical imposition by the state—whose involvement remains a last resort when internal resolution fails.

The ritual elements of *Suluh*, such as the *peumat jaro* handshake, the *kenduri* feast, and the public reading of peace agreements, serve performative and legitimizing functions. These actions do not merely mark the conclusion of a dispute but symbolically restore ruptured social ties before the wider community. In this sense, *Suluh* produces not only agreements but reconstitutes social bonds fractured by conflict, affirming its role as a ritual reconciliation process integral to social cohesion.

The five foundational principles underpinning *Suluh*—acceptability, religious responsibility, accessibility, voluntariness, and transparency—reflect a locally grounded justice model that emphasizes relational harmony over procedural formalism (Manfarisyah, 2016). This contrasts sharply with the state legal system, which privileges legality, evidence, and formal authority. The *Suluh* approach prioritizes restoration of social relations and spiritual equilibrium, aligning closely with Islamic teachings and Acehnese *adat* (customary law).

Although the substance of *Suluh* remains consistent across the regions studied, variations in form and ritual intensity are apparent. Banda Aceh features a more formalized and institutionalized practice; Aceh Utara incorporates written peace agreements and broader community participation; while Aceh Selatan employs a simpler yet spiritually significant ceremony, especially when outsiders are involved. Such variations indicate *Suluh*'s adaptability to local social and geographical contexts while preserving its core function as a vehicle for social restoration.

A critical insight from the data is the relatively marginal role of the state in local conflict resolution. The state apparatus, represented by police or courts, is only engaged when *Suluh* processes prove insufficient. This underscores the persistence of legal pluralism in Aceh, where state law coexists alongside customary and religious legal orders upheld by the community. Here, *Suluh* acts as a crucial mechanism

sustaining social autonomy and preventing fragmentation that might arise from formal state intervention perceived as external or disconnected.

However, it is important to recognize that *Suluh* also carries the potential to reproduce dominant social norms that may disadvantage vulnerable groups such as women, children, or minorities. The imperative to reconcile might suppress expressions of deeper structural injustices. Therefore, while *Suluh* remains effective and relevant, continuous critical reflection is necessary to ensure it remains inclusive and does not merely perpetuate a superficial social harmony. *Suluh* in Aceh exemplifies a justice mechanism rooted in local values, participation, and communal wisdom. It functions not only to defuse conflict but to repair the social fabric torn by discord. Amid contemporary demands for more humane and contextually sensitive conflict resolution approaches, *Suluh* offers a valuable model for developing restorative justice systems that are culturally grounded, socially relevant, and normatively robust.

Conclusion

The practice of *Suluh* as a conflict resolution mechanism in Acehnese society reflects a deeply rooted cultural and normative tradition that continues to function effectively within a plural legal framework. Historically, *Suluh* has evolved from royal customs to a structured community-based mediation model embedded in local governance and social norms. Normatively, its legitimacy is grounded in both Islamic legal principles and Acehnese customary law, making it a unique model of legal pluralism. Field research conducted in Banda Aceh, South Aceh, and North Aceh reveals that *Suluh* is still actively practiced and formally integrated into village regulations (*Qanun Gampong*), serving as a practical embodiment of restorative justice. Its strength lies not only in resolving disputes but also in restoring social harmony through culturally resonant processes. This demonstrates that *Suluh* is not merely a traditional practice but a living institution with enduring relevance. This study affirms that the *Suluh* model offers valuable insights for the development of inclusive, community-based conflict resolution systems at both local and national levels. Recognizing and institutionalizing such mechanisms within formal legal and policy frameworks could enhance social cohesion, legal accessibility, and justice in diverse cultural contexts. As such, *Suluh* provides a compelling model for integrating indigenous legal practices into broader efforts to strengthen legal pluralism and promote sustainable peace.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest, whether financial or non-financial, related to the content of this manuscript. This statement is made truthfully and with full awareness.

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