

THE CULTURAL PREACHING VALUES OF THE GAYO TRADITION MELENGKAN IN ACEH

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Abstract

The delivery of Islamic preaching can be effectively conducted through cultural approaches, such as the Gayo tradition of melengkan in Aceh. This tradition involves delivering speeches at wedding ceremonies using metaphorical sentences that embed Islamic messages. It serves as a valuable means of preaching and merits preservation. However, the tradition faces challenges due to the declining number of people skilled in the art of melengkan. It is hoped that local government policies will support training the next generation in the art of melengkan to prevent this tradition from becoming extinct. This research aims to analyze the forms and preaching values within the tradition, employing a descriptive qualitative research method. Data collection is conducted through

interviews with key informants, including performers of *melengkan*, traditional leaders, and community figures from the Gayo community. Observations of traditional wedding ceremonies and analysis of *melengkan* speech texts are supplemented with other literature. The research findings indicate that the cultural preaching messages in *melengkan* include informative, persuasive, and coercive types. The values embodied within these messages encompass beliefs, worship or Sharia, and morality. Further studies could explore broader applications of cultural preaching values in multicultural settings worldwide, offering a model for other regions with similar cultural and religious dynamics.

Penyampaian dakwah Islam dapat dilakukan secara efektif melalui pendekatan budaya, seperti tradisi *melengkan* di Aceh. Tradisi ini melibatkan penyampaian pidato dalam upacara pernikahan menggunakan kalimat metaforis yang menyertakan pesan-pesan Islam. Ini merupakan sarana berharga untuk berdakwah dan layak untuk dilestarikan. Namun, tradisi ini menghadapi tantangan karena menurunnya jumlah orang yang terampil dalam seni *melengkan*. Diharapkan kebijakan pemerintah daerah akan mendukung pelatihan generasi berikutnya dalam seni *melengkan* untuk mencegah kepunahan tradisi ini. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis bentuk dan nilai-nilai dakwah dalam tradisi tersebut, menggunakan metode penelitian kualitatif deskriptif. Pengumpulan data dilakukan melalui wawancara dengan informan kunci, termasuk pelaku *melengkan*, pemimpin tradisional, dan tokoh masyarakat dari komunitas Gayo. Observasi upacara pernikahan tradisional dan analisis teks pidato *melengkan* dilengkapi dengan literatur lainnya. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pesan dakwah budaya dalam *melengkan* mencakup tipe informatif, persuasif, dan koersif. Nilai-nilai yang terkandung dalam pesan-pesan ini mencakup kepercayaan, ibadah atau Syariah, dan moral. Studi lanjutan bisa mengeksplorasi aplikasi luas nilai-nilai dakwah budaya di lingkungan multikultural di seluruh dunia, menawarkan model untuk wilayah lain dengan dinamika budaya dan agama yang serupa.

Keywords: Cultural preaching values, Gayo ethnicity, *Melengkan* traditions

Introduction

Indonesia is a pluralistic country with diverse ethnicities, languages, religions, and skin colors. This diversity is a national asset that fosters social harmony and unity. The multiculturalism within religions and cultures is essential, and Indonesian society must approach it with wisdom. Islam, as a religion, is inseparable from culture and mutually influences it because both contain values and symbols. Religion influences culture in its formation, while culture can influence the value system and symbols of religion (Marhamah & Fauzi, 2020). Religion is a symbol that represents the value of obedience to God, just as culture contains values and symbols for humans to live by. The principle of assimilating Islam with local culture occurs not only in the social aspect but also in the dimension of worship, articulating the message of Islam according to the needs and issues of society. For instance, Javanese culture gradually absorbs various elements of religion, including Islam. The presence of Islam in Java has maintained the relevant and unique nuances of Indonesian Islam, enriching the actualization of Islamic culture as a universal religion (Susilo & Syato, 2016). The presence of Islam does not immediately erode the cultural values and traditions already formed within society; rather, a dialectic occurs between these two elements.

Religion and culture are vital elements within society that interact with each other, each possessing its own fundamental values. They are capable of acculturating directly and harmoniously (Saefudin et al., 2020). As found by Aziz et al. (2020), the acculturation of Islam with Minang culture takes the form of synthesis, with customs adapting to Islamic teachings. The acculturation of Islam with Minang culture occurs peacefully, thus not causing rejection from traditional leaders and avoiding upheaval within the local community (Aziz et al., 2020). The compatibility of Islam with Minang culture is reflected in its philosophy, which signifies that Minang customs are based on Islam, and Islam itself is based on the Quran. Islam's ability to interact with culture affirms its universality. Similarly, in conveying Islamic messages through preaching, it should be based on the objective conditions

of the target audience and the surrounding situation. One approach to delivering Islamic messages is through a cultural approach. The messages are conveyed in the form of informative messages, which provide factual information; persuasive messages, which aim to raise awareness to change the attitudes of the message recipients; and coercive messages, which are forceful and may involve sanctions (Jafar & Amrullah, 2018). The preaching messages are conveyed through the symbolism of tradition and customs, referred to as cultural preaching (Mualimin, 2020).

Cultural preaching is an effort to instill Islamic values in all aspects of life, considering the potential and inclinations of humans as cultural beings (Thaib, 2018). It can be said that cultural preaching is Islam's doctrinal acknowledgment of the validity of local existence and wisdom that are not in conflict with the principle of monotheism (Damsuki, 2019). The cultural preaching approach demonstrates that preaching should introduce to society the universal goodness recognized by all humans, regardless of spatial and temporal boundaries (Ipaenin, 2018). The potential of humans in realizing culture is used as a means to understand the preaching message at the empirical level. The preaching message emerges in the form of formal practice that manifests in society, thus cultivating Islamic teachings within culture. This means that cultural preaching appears to reinforce local wisdom within a culture by separating it from elements that contradict the values of Islamic teachings. Islamic values in preaching include the value of faith, which relates to monotheism or the oneness of Allah, the value of worship, which relates to the rules to attain Allah's pleasure, and the value of morality, which relates to good behavior towards God, fellow humans, and the universe (Achmadin, 2023).

Cultural preaching accommodates cultural values in a creative and innovative manner without diminishing the religious substance. Therefore, cultural preaching adopts a more bottom-up approach, strengthening communal religious life based on distinctive values (Ramdhani, 2016). If cultural preaching refers to preaching with a culturally-informed Islamic approach, then it involves peacefully engaging with the culture that develops

within society. This is known as compromise preaching, which accommodates and appreciates local wisdom (Al Hana, 2011). The compromise preaching approach has significantly influenced the history of Islam's spread beyond the Arabian Peninsula, including in Africa, Europe, Asia, and especially in Indonesia, as practiced by the Wali Sanga who integrated Islam with local culture. In this context, a reciprocal, synergistic, and cohesive relationship between preaching and culture is evident. Therefore, cultural preaching serves as a predictive reference for realizing preaching by considering cultural aspects according to the development of society. It can be said that this doctrinal truth reference confirms the cultural diversity of society. Islam and culture hold parallel positions when there is an adaptive and creative dialectic, ensuring that neither is in a subordinate position that ultimately weakens the other.

Substantially, the purpose of cultural preaching is aimed at dynamism and purification. Dynamism reflects efforts to appreciate the potential and inclinations of humans as cultural beings, while striving for culture to enlighten human life. Meanwhile, purification is intended as an effort to purify the values within culture to reflect monotheistic values. Therefore, cultural preaching can be conveyed through various traditions that continue to be preserved within society. Traditions that develop within society are not merely empty rituals but contain meaningful messages. For example, in wedding traditions, which include procedures and stages that must be followed. Marriage is a basic human need, so its process often becomes a sacred tradition in the cultural construction of certain societies (Mualimin et al., 2018).

The sacredness of traditions is evident in the customs that accompany the process within the cultural values embraced by the community. For instance, the Gayo ethnic group, residing in the highlands of Aceh province, is part of the Proto-Malay or Old Malay family, migrating from the Dutch East Indies to the archipelago in the first wave before the Common Era (Ibrahim, 2007, p. 9). The Gayo highlands consist of several regencies, namely Aceh Tengah, Bener Meriah, Gayo Lues, Gayo Serbejadi in Aceh

Timur, Gayo Alas in Aceh Tenggara, and Gayo Kalul in Aceh Tamiang (Melalatoa, 2006, p. 14). The cultural philosophy of the Gayo people explains the compatibility of Gayo culture with Islam through the expression "*Edet Mungenal, Hukom Mubeda*," which means that tradition recognizes something as an action because it is customary, while Sharia distinguishes between what is right and what is wrong (Ibrahim, 2013, p. 40). The compatibility between Islam and Gayo culture is due to the fact that the customary value system is not in conflict with Islamic teachings; instead, it is integrated and supportive of Islamic Sharia.

The wedding tradition in the Gayo is carried out according to the rules and culture called *melengkan*. *Melengkan* is a customary speech aimed at providing information or advice about religion, married life, and community life. *Melengkan* can be considered as a form of oral literary art conveyed through carefully chosen metaphorical or rhymed sentences (Pinan, 2003, p. 252). Therefore, the tradition of *melengkan* is usually conveyed by the "Reje" (village head) or "Pemelengkan" (performer of the *melengkan* art).

Many previous studies have examined the *melengkan* tradition. The ideology within the text of the *melengkan* ceremony emphasizes the meaning of interpersonality ideologies in the contexts of religion, democracy (power), and socio-cultural aspects (Ansari, 2014). Similar studies also analyze the structure of the *melengkan* tradition, including its diction and linguistic style, which consist of traditional expressions such as proverbs, metaphors, and maxims, and stylistic devices such as metaphor, simile, and symbolism (Afriani, 2018). In another study, cultural values in the *melengkan* tradition are explained, including values of politeness, respect, speaking gently, hospitality, and steadfastness (Jaya & Daud, 2017). Similarly, in another study, it is mentioned about the messages contained in the *melengkan* tradition, such as maintaining good relations, being dutiful to parents, honoring others, preserving marital harmony, and encouraging the creation of a harmonious and loving family (*sakinah mawaddah warahmah*) (Zain, et.al, 2021). However, research focusing on the cultural preaching values of the *melengkan* tradition still needs more exploration.

This study follows up on previous research on the *melengkan* tradition. The difference lies in the research focus, which is on the cultural preaching values within the *melengkan* tradition. The *melengkan* tradition needs to be preserved, especially considering the declining number of individuals with the skill to perform this traditional art, particularly among the younger generation. Preserving culture can be achieved through scientific studies. Based on this problem background, this research aims to analyze the forms of preaching messages in the Gayo *melengkan* tradition in Aceh and the preaching values within the Gayo *melengkan* tradition in Aceh. Understanding the preaching values contained within the *melengkan* tradition results in the implementation of the tradition going beyond mere ceremonial purposes.

Method

This research employs qualitative methods with an ethnographic approach, emphasizing the search for meanings, phenomena, symbols, and descriptions of natural and holistic phenomena, conveyed narratively (Yusuf, 2019, p. 329). It aims to uncover the meanings within local culture and the *melengkan* tradition of cultural preaching, examining the forms and values of preaching messages. The research is conducted in Aceh Tengah Regency, a Gayo area where the *melengkan* tradition is still practiced during wedding ceremonies.

Data collection involves interviews with performers of the *melengkan* tradition (*pemelengkan*), traditional figures, and members of the Gayo community, as well as observations of how the *melengkan* tradition is carried out during weddings. Additional documentation includes *melengkan* speech texts from several *pemelengkan*, journal articles, books, research reports, and other relevant literature. Triangulation techniques are utilized to cross-verify data sources, enhancing the reliability of the results. Data analysis follows the qualitative model of Miles and Huberman, involving interactive and continuous analysis until saturation is reached (Sugiyono, 2020, p. 244). The analysis process begins with data reduction, which includes summarizing,

selecting, and focusing on the main topics, identifying themes and patterns to provide a clear overview and facilitate further data collection. The second step, data presentation, organizes the data in narrative form for easier comprehension. The final step involves drawing conclusions and verification, clarifying unclear aspects of the study to provide a definitive examination.

Finding and Discussion

Forms of Da'wah Messages in the Tradition of *Melengkan* of the Gayo Ethnicity

Messages are the essence of the preaching delivery process. These are statements presented as symbols that convey the intended meaning from the communicator to the recipient (Effendy, 2017, p. 18). In the communication process, a message is an element conveyed by the sender to the receiver, either face-to-face or through media. It can include information, advice, propaganda, entertainment, and more (Sobur, 2018, p. 645). Preaching messages in the Gayo *Melengkan* tradition are delivered in the form of informative, persuasive, and coercive messages. These message forms are adapted to the stages of the customary wedding procession. The stages of the customary wedding procession in the Gayo ethnic group include "*munginte*" (engagement), "*turun caram*" (presenting gold or dowry), "*i serahen ku guru*" or "*berguru*" (handing over to the teacher or receiving advice), and "*mujule bai*" (sending off the bride and groom). The analysis of the forms of preaching messages in the Gayo *melengkan* tradition is based on excerpts from several narrations or *melengkan* speech texts according to the procession and purpose of the activity. The forms of preaching messages in the Gayo *melengkan* tradition are informative, persuasive, and coercive messages as shown in table 1.

Table 1. Forms of Preaching Messages in the *Melengkan* Tradition

Message Form	Customary Procession	<i>Melengkan</i> Sentences	Meaning
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Informative Messages	Munginte (engagement)	<i>kami penge ari kuyu beremus, bede remalan, i kiteni ara inih simumatae (1)</i>	We heard through the wind blowing that our family has a good seed
		<i>kin geh ni sedere, kite petama, pintu beruke, alas bedenang. buge jeroh hamal ni kami urum niipi jege (2)</i>	The arrival of our relatives is welcomed, the door is open, and the mat is spread out. Hopefully, our efforts are fruitful
	Turun Caram (presenting gold or dowry)	<i>reje, ujut ayu murubah, mukim mera mupinah, mat ani mera musapur terang, mera we mutaluk iden, mera we mulupen lale ku kite ni heme (3)</i>	Village head, with the existing exchange, there might be movement, eyes might wander, for us as humans, we can forget.
		<i>reje, kuyu keras bepenampong, edet berujud, fi'il berupe, semi betubuh, ke si katan kuning bge betimang, si putih nge bebilang, gere lebih gere kurang si ageh-agehe we (4)</i>	Village head, intentions and agreements have been proven, gold has been weighed and money counted, neither more nor less, exactly as agreed.
Persuasive Messages	Beguru (receiving advice)	<i>ko rowanmu turah sepegi seperange, temas urum-urum temas, nyanya urum-urumnyanya, besitunungen, besipengen, besi ejeren (5)</i>	You two must be harmonious, as one, difficulties are shared, joys are felt together, burdens are carried together, and happiness are shared equally.
		<i>ike itunungko kase ling ni kami, insyaAllah langitmu gere mugegur, bumimu gere muguncang anakku (6)</i>	If you follow our advice, my child, God willing, the sky will not tremble and the earth will not shake.
Coercive Messages		<i>murip ikanung edet anakku, mate ikanung bumi, murip turah benar. mate boh suci (7)</i>	Life is carried in the body, death is carried by the earth, life must

be righteous, death
must be pure.

Informative Messages

Informative messages are statements or information aimed at broadening the audience's knowledge and awareness. These messages provide information or facts that enable the audience to understand the content, draw their own conclusions, and make decisions based on that understanding (Cangara, 2019). The informative message forms in the *Melengkan* tradition are predominantly used during the "munginte" or engagement procession and the "turun caram" or dowry presentation procession. The Gayo wedding customary procession begins with the "munginte" or engagement procession, usually conducted by a "telangke" (mediator) from the groom's side to the bride's side through several stages. This is why the Gayo wedding customary procession is called "ngerje beraturen" because it involves specific stages that must be followed in the wedding customary procession (Ningsih et al., 2016). The initial stage of the "munginte" procession involves discussions or consultations between the parents or families of both parties, referred to as "risik kono." The "munginte" procession also serves to ascertain whether the woman being proposed to is not already lawfully engaged to someone else. This aligns with Islamic teachings, which prohibit proposing to a woman who is lawfully engaged to another man. This principle is emphasized in the hadith that states: "It is not permissible for a believer to bid against his brother's bid, nor to propose over his brother's proposal until he leaves it" (Al-Bukhari, 2011, p. 920).

In this "munginte" procession, the "pemelangkan" (performer of the *melengkan*) from the groom's side directly delivers a message face-to-face to the "pemelengkan" from the bride's side. The *melengkan* speech is conveyed in the form of metaphorical sentences (see table 1). The first sentence indicates the firm decision of the groom's side towards the woman being proposed to as a potential wife. However, this determination should not be expressed directly but rather metaphorically. In Gayo culture, expressing intentions

and purposes directly through sentences is considered inappropriate according to custom (based on an interview with Gayo traditional figure, Yusin Saleh). Additionally, nonverbally, the *melengkan* message is symbolized by giving an object, such as betel nut equipment, termed "*adat penampang kuyu*" (wind blocker), when the groom's family visits the bride's house as a sign of engagement to prevent the acceptance of proposals from others.

The *melengkan* speech from the groom's side is then responded to by the bride's side (see sentence 2 in table 1). This message informs that the bride's side has welcomed the arrival of the groom's side and will consider the proposal after consulting with the entire family. Other information is also conveyed in the form of a message from the bride's side to the groom's side through the *melengkan* speech which means "we hope to receive guidance from Allah while consulting with the family so that we can think carefully about whether to accept or reject the proposal" (based on an interview with Gayo *pemelengkan*, Ridwan). The *melengkan* speech in the proposal process (*munginte*) serves as an informative message, informing the potential bride about the purpose and intention of the groom's visit. Similarly, the message from the bride's side indicates their openness to the groom's intentions. The religious message conveyed through the *melengkan* narration highlights that Islam encourages gathering information about the potential bride beforehand. This practice ensures that the groom's decision is more resolute and helps eliminate any doubts (Zuhri et al., 2021). In line with this, Islam advises a man who wishes to marry a woman to see or observe her first. In terms of proposing, Islam permits a man to see the woman he intends to marry to better understand the qualities of his potential wife, as affirmed by the hadith: "From Al-Mughirah bin Shu'bah, who proposed to a woman, the Prophet Muhammad said, look at her! Because it will strengthen your marriage" (HR. Tirmidzi and Nasa'i) (Tirmidzi, 2017, p. 1001).

The preaching message conveyed in the *melengkan* speech about proposing or *khittbah*, emphasizes this as an important stage in marriage and aims to communicate a man's feelings and desires towards a woman. As affirmed in the Qur'an: 'And there is no sin upon you if you propose

marriage to women, or conceal what is in your hearts. Allah knows that you will think of them. But do not make a secret contract with them, except in an honorable manner, nor resolve on a marriage tie until the prescribed period is over. And know that Allah knows what is in your hearts, so be cautious of Him. And know that Allah is All-Forgiving, Most Forbearing' (QS. Al-Baqarah verse 235). According to Sya'rawi's interpretation, this verse highlights the importance of proposing because it determines a person's future—whether to commit to a new family and its responsibilities or to decide against establishing a relationship. That is why the proposing process is conveyed with gentle and respectful language, in accordance with the dignity of the woman (Sya'rawi, 2015, p. 1013).

Informative messages in the *melengkan* tradition are also used in the process of *turun caram* (delivering the dowry). *Turun caram* is performed after the acceptance of the proposal and agreement by both parties on the amount of the dowry (Coubat, 1984, p. 58). The procession of delivering the dowry is no longer carried out by the family themselves but has been entrusted to the customary authorities such as the *Reje* (village head), *Imam* (religious leader), *Petue* (elders), and the community. The message conveyed by the *pemelengkan* during the dowry delivery includes the third *melengkan* sentence, which is responded to by the bride's side with the fourth sentence. The *melengkan* speech states that the groom has sent the dowry according to the agreed-upon terms and expresses hope that it will be accepted by the bride's side. The bride's side then confirms that they have checked and verified that the dowry is in accordance with the prior agreement. If there are any discrepancies, the groom will make the necessary adjustments (interview with Gayo *pemelengkan*, Abdullah AR). Before concluding the *melengkan* speech, the groom apologizes for any shortcomings in the dowry provided. The *melengkan* speech communicates that the dowry is one of the husband's first obligations to his wife, aimed at honoring the woman so she can prepare herself for marriage. This is supported by the Qur'an, which states: "And give the women [upon marriage] their [bridal] gifts graciously. But if they give up

willingly to you anything of it, then take it in satisfaction and ease" (QS. An-Nisa' verse 4).

Persuasive Message

Persuasive messages are those conveyed by the communicator to the audience with the aim of changing their mindset or attitude by persuading them without any elements of coercion (Mulyana, 2017, p. 92). Persuasive messages in the tradition of *Melengkan* are used to provide advice to the prospective groom and bride. These *Melengkan* messages are usually delivered at the stage of "*beguru*," a ceremony where the prospective groom and bride are handed over to their respective religious leaders (*Imams*) to be given advice related to religious matters (Melalatoa, 1982, p. 104). The *melengkan* delivers a message in the fifth sentence to persuade the two prospective spouses to strive for a harmonious family, despite the challenges involved. In marriage, an adjustment must be made between two personalities who come from different backgrounds and have distinct life experiences. A harmonious family is one that is peaceful, loving, complementary, and cooperative. Achieving this harmony requires understanding each other's differences, addressing them positively, and communicating assertively (Sainul, 2018). This principle is supported by the Quran in Surah Al-Furqan, verse 74, which states: 'And those who say, "Our Lord, grant us from among our wives and offspring comfort to our eyes and make us an example for the righteous." Harmony within the family will be achieved when the family members can function and fulfill their roles properly while adhering firmly to religious values.

Persuasive messages are also conveyed by the *melengkan* with the phrase "*ike itunungko kase ling ni kami, insyaAllah langitmu gere mugegur, bumimu gere muguncang anakku*," which means if you follow our advice, my child, God willing, the sky will not tremble and the earth will not shake. This message persuades to sincerely heed parental advice, as one key to happiness is being dutiful to parents. Thus, a child should obey their parents' commands as long as they do not contradict religious commands. This aligns with the

Quranic affirmation that means "Worship Allah and associate nothing with Him, and be kind to parents." (QS. An-Nisa' verse 36). Persuasive messages in the *melengkan* tradition are more prominently used during the *beguru* procession, as *beguru* involves providing advice to the prospective groom and bride. The purpose of the *beguru* activity is to provide guidance on married life in accordance with Islamic teachings, usually conveyed by elders before the wedding ceremony (Hamda et al., 2023). Therefore, delivering advice or guidance in a persuasive manner can leave a deeper impression and significantly influence the understanding, attitudes, and actions of the recipients. Persuasion is a communication process aimed at changing someone's attitudes and behaviors through verbal or nonverbal messages (Devito, 2019, p. 447). The effectiveness of persuasive messages largely depends on the interpersonal relationship between the communicator and the audience, as well as on motivational factors.

Coercive Message

A coercive message aims to forcibly change attitudes, opinions, and behaviors, typically through commands that instill fear (Habibi, 2018). In the tradition of *melengkan*, coercive messages take the form of directives, explaining the sanctions imposed if these directives are violated. The seventh *melengkan* speech emphasizes adherence to the customary norms prevalent in the Gayo community. In Gayo culture, these norms act as guidelines, mandates, and controllers of appropriate behavior. By adhering to these customary norms, a harmonious way of life is realized, as expressed in the customary phrase "*muriṗ turah benar, mate boh suci*" (life must be righteous, death must be pure) (interview with community leader, Anwar). Gayo cultural values reflect the ideal concept of character expected to shape and color the patterns of Gayo society's actions. Gayo culture has a principal value called "*mukemel*" (self-esteem), derived from the word "*kemel*" meaning shame. This cultural value emphasizes the importance of maintaining one's dignity by avoiding thoughts and actions that could lead to a loss of self-

esteem, such as reprehensible actions or those contrary to religion and culture.

Da'wah Values in the Tradition of *Melengkan* Gayo Ethnicity in Aceh.

The value of preaching encompasses a set of rules or teachings that serve as the basis for actions and behavior. These are conveyed to others to encourage them to act virtuously in accordance with Islamic law (Zumaroh, 2021). According to the components of Islamic teachings, preaching values are broadly divided into three categories: faith, worship, and morals (Achmadin, 2023). These values are dynamic, adapting to the spirit of the times and the development of knowledge in society (Basit, 2013, p. 195). The Gayo *melengkan* tradition acts as a medium for conveying these preaching values. Through the *melengkan* tradition, Gayo communities learn about Islamic values embedded in the messages. The tradition plays a significant role in the wedding process (*ngerje*) of the Gayo ethnic group and aligns with the elements of preaching, thus qualifying as cultural preaching. Cultural preaching is a model for conveying Islamic teachings that is more tolerant and open, as it accommodates the culture and customs of the local community. The integration of Islam into traditional wedding processes exemplifies spiritual cultural preaching (Astuti & Amirullah, 2019). The analysis of preaching values in the Gayo *melengkan* tradition is derived from excerpts of several narratives or *melengkan* speech texts, selected according to their relevance to the process and purpose of the activity. This selection aims to provide a focused and clear understanding of the preaching values in the speech texts, emphasizing the values of faith, worship, and morality.

Values of Faith

Faith is the cornerstone of Islamic teachings because it underpins all actions and behaviors that define a Muslim. It represents the ideological or belief dimension in Islam and should remain free from doubt (Atin, 2018). During marriage ceremonies, the words of the *pemelengkan* embody the value of faith, as demonstrated in the seventh sentence (see table 1). This

emphasizes faith and the oneness of Allah, illustrated by the narrative of adhering to the pillars of faith and using Islam as our life guide (*rukun imen urum rukun Islam, oya kin amat-amatenmu kena oya isi ni kiteb sucinte Al-Qur'an*). These preaching messages are typically conveyed during the *beguru* process before the wedding ceremony. Because in the *beguru* process, the content predominantly focuses on faith, sharia, or worship and manners, aiming to foster stability and harmony within the family (interview with *pemelengkan*, Abdullah AR). Additionally, it is noted that traditions and Islamic teachings encourage society to achieve a balanced fulfillment of physical and spiritual needs, as suggested by the saying "*beras padi tungket imen*," which means that adequate basic needs will strengthen faith (interview with community figure, Alam Syuhada).

Another aspect of faith value evident in this wedding tradition is the tradition of '*bersibeteheh*.' Marriage, as a sacred bond after faith, underscores the importance of matching faith, crucial for achieving the purpose of marriage. In the Gayo tradition, investigating prospective grooms and brides, known as '*bersibeteheh*,' indicates that the marriage process must adhere to customary stages (interview with customary figure, Abdullah Kader). This tradition of '*bersibeteheh*' aligns with Islamic "*ta'aruf*." "*Bersibeteheh*" involves not only knowing the name and family but also understanding their religion or faith. This aligns with the Hadith of Prophet Muhammad, which states: "A woman is married for four reasons: her wealth, her family status, her beauty, and her religion. Choose the religious woman, and you will prosper" (HR. Bukhari and Muslim from Abu Hurairah) (Al-Bukhari, 2011, p. 910).

Value of Worship

Worship is a crucial religious ritual behavior for adherents of a religion, helping to preserve and maintain the sanctity of their faith. As such, worship is an essential activity that facilitates human communication with the Creator. It is also an act of devotion to Allah, drawing believers closer to Him and fulfilling their life's duties as creatures of Allah (Husna & Arif, 2021). The *melengkan* message conveying the value of worship

states: "Anakku, bayaku, si lime waktu sikatan wajib porape enti taringko kena oya tiang ni agama" which mean My child, remember, the most important thing is not to miss the obligatory five daily prayers. Understand and practice the pillars of faith and the pillars of Islam, for they are our fundamental principles.' This statement underscores the importance of maintaining worship to Allah, particularly the obligation to perform the five daily prayers, which are considered the pillar of the religion. Thus, prayer is one of the most vital means of communication and connection between humans and Allah. This aligns with the Hadith of the Prophet Muhammad, which states: 'The essence of all matters is Islam, and its pillar is prayer' (HR. Tirmidhi no 2616).

The embodiment of the value of worship in the *melengkan* tradition is also evident in the advice to speak truthfully and convey the truth, in accordance with the Qur'an and Hadith. The prerequisite for the greatness of deeds is to convey the truth, as affirmed in the Qur'an: 'O you who have believed, fear Allah and speak words of appropriate justice' (QS. Al-Ahzab verse 70). Society will be corrupted if the truth is concealed or hidden. As expressed in the *melengkan* message "tingkis ulak ku bide, sesat ulak ku dene" which means correct the wrongs through justice, rectify the mistakes through religion' (interview with cultural figure, Anwar). The principle of truth in Islamic teachings is also manifested through fulfilling promises or trusts, as in the tradition of delivering the dowry, which must be in accordance with the agreed-upon amount. This is expressed through the *melengkan* message "si katan kuning nge bertimang, ke si perin putih keta nge bebilang. The meaning conveyed by this *melengkan* message is that the dowry, whether in the form of gold or money, has been weighed and counted according to the agreement or contract. This conformity is seen as upholding trustworthiness or truthfulness. The value of worship in this *melengkan* text is a worship in the form of *ghairu mahdhah* or *muamalah*, encompassing all behavior that brings goodness and is performed with sincere intentions for the sake of Allah. This form of worship is typically carried out among fellow humans or in horizontal relationships (Bajuri, 2022). It also pertains to fulfilling the

promise made by the groom regarding the agreed amount of dowry. The obligation to fulfill promises is emphasized in the Quran: 'And never say of anything, "Indeed, I will do that tomorrow," except [when adding], "If Allah wills." And remember your Lord when you forget [it] and say, "Perhaps my Lord will guide me to what is nearer than this to right conduct" (QS. Al-Kahfi verse 23-24).

Values of Morality

Morality encompasses behavior that manifests good words and deeds, as delineated by the Quran and Hadith. Thus, it is intrinsically linked with faith and worship, encompassing patterns of behavior that reflect belief and obedience. Morality pertains to how one behaves towards Allah, fellow human beings, and nature (Habibah, 2015). The messages during the engagement ceremony that convey moral values include the following: "*becerak enti bubak, beperi enti sergak, becerak gelah lagu santan mulimak i bibirmu*" It means to honor others with a soft and gentle voice, accompanied by a polite and friendly attitude. Religion commands to honor parents by prohibiting harsh and loud voices that may hurt their feelings. Therefore, in Gayo culture, those who do not use respectful language towards others are considered to be engaging in *sumang perceraan* or inappropriate speech (according to an interview with a cultural figure, Jhoni) In Gayo culture, speaking in a rude manner, such as *becerak sergak* shouting or *jis* raising one's voice is considered uncivilized behavior (according to an interview with a cultural figure, Alam Syuhada).

The *melengkan* message aligns with the Quranic injunction which means: "And your Lord has decreed that you not worship except Him, and to parents, good treatment. Whether one or both of them reach old age [while] with you, say not to them [so much as], 'uff,' and do not repel them but speak to them a noble word" (QS. Al-Isra' verse 23). In addition to verbal expressions, the *melengken* message also conveys the value of worship through actions, as expressed "*remalan ko kase enti begerdak, mujurah enti musintak, salak nti osah kerut, budi turah belangi, si tetuwe i mulit-yenko*". The message

emphasizes acting with gentleness and politeness, such as walking without stomping and maintaining a friendly or cheerful demeanor when interacting with others. This is considered a form of honoring others (interview with cultural figure, Yusin Saleh). This principle is also emphasized in the Quran: 'And do not turn your cheek [in contempt] toward people and do not walk through the earth exultantly. Indeed, Allah does not like everyone self-deluded and boastful' (QS. Lukman verse 18).

Conclusion

Gayo tradition of *melengkan* serves as a means of conveying Islamic teachings through cultural approaches, known as cultural preaching. This method is highly effective in Indonesia's multicultural society. Islam peacefully entered Indonesia through cultural integration, as it naturally accommodates local culture. Islam didn't aim to erase existing cultural practices but rather to internalize Islamic teachings into them. Gayo *melengkan* tradition as a form of cultural preaching is conveyed during the various stages of customary wedding ceremonies, employing informative, persuasive, and sometimes coercive approaches. These messages embody preaching values such as faith (*aqidah*), worship (*ibadah*) or transaction (*muamalah*), and morals (*akhlak*). Preserving and transmitting the art of *melengkan* is crucial, as this skill is declining. Therefore, it's vital for local governments to support the next generation in learning and practicing *melengkan* through training programs and competitions to ensure this tradition endures.

The findings from this research not only underscore the significance of the *melengkan* tradition in integrating Islamic teachings with local customs but also highlight a practical framework for cultural preservation and religious education. For policymakers and educational institutions, there is a valuable opportunity to incorporate *melengkan* as a case study of cultural resilience and religious adaptation. This inclusion could enhance students' understanding of cultural diversity and religious harmony, promoting a more inclusive approach to religious education. Additionally, scholars and

researchers can further explore the impact of such cultural practices on social cohesion and individual identity formation. By conducting comparative studies across different regions or even similar practices in other cultures, researchers can gain deeper insights into the mechanisms through which cultural practices can be leveraged to foster societal harmony and religious understanding. This can lead to broader applications of cultural preaching in multicultural settings worldwide, offering a model for other regions with similar cultural and religious dynamics.

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