

Encouraging communities' creativity in utilizing betel leaf as a traditional Aceh wedding ornament

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ABSTRACT

The activity of stringing betel leaves is a tradition in the Aceh region as one of the preparations for the handover of the bride and groom. While the betel leaves that are strung are called '*ranup meususon*' in Acehnese. Betel leaf symbolizes the glory of the Acehnese people to honor guests. In Aceh wedding customs, the arrangement of betel leaves is a traditional Aceh wedding ornament that is important for the bride and groom. Many people use betel leaves only as medicine. So that the creativity that was previously often done is lost. The arranging *ranup meususon* is generally carried out by older people in the village, while the younger generation is almost uninvolved in the activity. The solution to this problem is to strive to increase the community's creativity in utilizing betel leaves as a traditional delivery decoration for Aceh weddings by making training activities for preparing betel leaves as *ranup meususon*. This community service activity aims to preserve Acehnese customs and culture for the younger generation as cultural heirs. The method of implementation in this activity is material deepening and group practice. The results of the service attended by the community can be seen from the enthusiasm and seriousness of the participants in participating in the activity and the success of arranging betel leaves in the form of their respective creations.

KEYWORDS

Aceh marriage customs; betel leaf; wedding ornaments

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1. Introduction

According to Law No. 20/2003, there are three types of education: formal, non-formal, and informal. Non-formal education, also called out-of-school education, focuses on the community, such as independence, funding, management, and other things useful for the community (Affandi, 2018). Community empowerment centers on community

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participation, which enables community empowerment strategies to meet basic needs (Steiner et al., 2022), thus realizing education for the community (Luitel, 2017).

The diversity of Indonesia's customs, cultures, and ethnic groups allows for community education to be provided and taught. This diversity of customs and culture is a wealth that Indonesia should be proud of. This wealth must be preserved by all Indonesian people so that it does not become extinct. It is very important to preserve Aceh's customs and culture, especially the art of *ranup meususon*, which means stringing betel leaves, to the next generation. That is very important because betel leaves symbolize glory for the people of Aceh and a way to welcome guests (Astuti et al., 2023). Stringing betel leaves is an art, but people must also be creative. Because creativity is a person's ability to create or make something new, be it an idea or a hand-crafted creative work that often differs from what already exists. The art of betel stringing, also known as *ranup meususon*, is one of Aceh's cultural heritages still preserved today.

People use betel leaves a lot. Usually it can be used as herbal medicine, used in traditional ceremonies, and consumed every day are some of the benefits of this plant (Rahyuni et al., 2021). In Aceh *ranup* is the name for betel leaves. It is also a specialty of Aceh since the sultanate era. Betel was given to *puan* for every guest who came as a sign of honor (Astuti et al., 2011). However, betel leaves are incorporated into the *Ranup Lampuan* dance to honor guests. At the end of the dance, betel leaves are given to each arriving guest as a sign of respect to the event host.

In this community service, the team felt the need to increase the creativity of the community by using betel leaves as decoration for traditional Aceh wedding gifts in Neubok Naleung Village, Bireuen Regency, to preserve Aceh's traditional arts and culture for the younger generation as the inheritors of the existing culture.

2. Method

In the implementation of this training activity using qualitative descriptive methods. This activity is divided into three days, and to achieve the objectives of this community service activity several stages are used. The first stage begins with making observations, identifying the problems found, namely the lack of community creation and innovation in utilizing natural materials, and then carrying out the initial data collection process in the field.

The second stage is formulating solutions and alternative solutions. In this activity, the solution offered is training activities to increase community creativity in utilizing betel leaves as traditional aceh wedding gifts in Neubok Naleung Village. The form of activities carried out is material delivery and practice. Finally, the third stage evaluates

the implementation of program activities. The program evaluation refers to the objectives set out in this series of activities: increasing community creativity in utilizing betel leaves as traditional Acehese wedding decoration.

3. Results

3.1. Educating the community on the benefits of betel leaves

Provides an understanding of the benefits of betel leaves including the health benefits of betel leaves. The benefits of betel leaf include its ability to treat wounds, relieve toothache, and as a natural antiseptic. In addition, betel leaves can also help reduce body odor and treat mouth ulcers.

In addition, participants were also given an understanding of betel processing, namely by (a) chewing directly to relieve toothache, (b) boiling the water as a mouthwash, (c) mashing and applying it on the face as a mask, (d) boiling and the water is used as a compress for wounds; and (e) used as an additional ingredient in traditional cigarettes. However, participants were reminded that before using it, they should ensure the cleanliness of betel leaves and pay attention to the dosage and duration of use.

3.2. Training on how to string betel leaves in Aceh marriage customs

Ranup meususon is symbolized as a sign of glory and a means of communication for both families of the bride and groom. Not all people can string *ranup meususon*. The fear is that once there are no more heirs in making this *ranup meususon*, it can result in the loss of national identity, especially in the cultural aspect.

The training of *ranup meususon* was carried out after the provision of knowledge material was completed. In this activity, in the initial stage, the participants were taught the steps of arranging betel nuts before the practice. At first, the participants were confused about the steps in the preparation of betel nut because they usually only saw the finished result, but gradually, the participants became more curious about the rare steps in the preparation. The participants were provided with the tools to make a betel nut arrangement, such as a place to arrange banana stems that have been cut, betel leaves, flowers for decoration, and needles. When the training was held, the atmosphere was made more comfortable, so participants felt comfortable arranging betel leaves.

Training activities for making wedding ornaments from betel leaves were carried out by face-to-face and hands-on practice and were carried out as expected. The process of preparing betel leaves as wedding ornaments is shown in [Figure 1](#).



a) The process of arranging betel leaves as wedding ornaments



b) Betel leaf arrangement as wedding ornaments

Figure 1. The process of preparing betel leaves as wedding ornaments of Aceh customs
Source: Author's documentation

4. Conclusion

Overall, the activity went smoothly, although there were some obstacles. The objectives of this activity were achieved as expected. The conditions found in implementing all programmed activities did not find obstacles, so the expected outcomes could be achieved. In addition to the main training, namely the ability of community creativity to develop in organizing betel leaves, participants also learned about the various benefits of betel leaves in health.

Disclosure statement

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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