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Politics of Memory in the Cumbok Tragedy: Case Study in Pidie Regency, Aceh

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Abstract

This study explores the Cumbok Tragedy in Aceh through the perspective of the Politics of Memory, emphasizing the importance of remembering the past amidst shifting political and cultural contexts. Politics of memory functions as both an academic critique and a strategic tool against dominant historical narratives. The research, conducted in Pidie District – the epicentre of the conflict and the most distorted in Cumbok’s history – adopts a qualitative case study approach to investigate real-life dynamics. Findings reveal that human rights violations were not confined to December 1945 – April 1946 but continued during the DI/TII rebellion initiated by PUSA Chairman Teungku Daud Beureueh in 1953. Fieldwork shows that persecution, impunity, forced marriages, and confiscation of uleebalang family assets persisted into the 1950s. Additionally, the study identifies complex socio-cultural issues in Pidie, indicating that patterns of violence and property seizure were more intricate and prolonged, extending the understanding of the Cumbok conflict’s lasting impacts.

Keywords

Cumbok tragedy, memory politics, serious historical human rights violations

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Политика памяти в Чумбокской трагедии: исследование в округе Пиде, Ачех

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Аннотация

Данное исследование посвящено Чумбокской трагедии в Ачехе, рассматриваемой сквозь призму политики памяти, с упором на необходимость помнить прошлое на фоне меняющихся политических и культурных контекстов. Политика памяти выступает одновременно в качестве научной критики и стратегического инструмента, направленного против доминирующих исторических нарративов. В исследовании, проведенном в округе Пиде – эпицентре конфликта, представление о котором наиболее искажено в истории Чумбока, применяется качественный метод с целью изучения реальной динамики. Результаты исследования показали, что нарушения прав человека не ограничивались периодом с декабря 1945 по апрель 1946 г., а продолжались во время восстания движения Даруль Ислам и Исламской Армии Индонезии, возглавленного председателем PUSA Тенгу Даудом Бёрё в 1953 г. Полевые исследования показывают, что преследования, безнаказанность, принудительные браки и конфискация имущества семей улебаланг продолжались до 1950-х гг. Кроме того, исследование выявляет сложные социально-культурные проблемы в Пиде, указывая на то, что модели насилия и захвата имущества были более запутанными и продолжительными, что расширяет понимание долгосрочных последствий конфликта в Чумбоке.

Ключевые слова

Чумбокская трагедия, политика памяти, серьезные нарушения прав человека в истории

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The Cumbok tragedy itself poses a serious human rights violation issue at the beginning of Indonesia's independence [Aspinal, 2005; El-Ibrahimi, 1996; Sjamsuddin, 1999]. Not only does this tragedy represent one of the forgotten severe human rights violations, but it also leads to a shift in agrarian politics in post-conflict Aceh, further marginalizing the uleebalang groups in the political and economic spheres [Shohibuddin, 2018].

The unresolved nature of the Cumbok tragedy within the kaleidoscope of Aceh's conflicts makes the peacemaking blueprint seem directionless. The process of unveiling cases of violence still follows a pattern from recent conflicts, such as the Free Aceh Movement (1976), the Military Operations Area (DOM) from 1989 to 1998, and post-reform conflicts (1999–2002). However, the conflict that began to manifest group conflicts leading to the tragedy of massacring uleebalang families from late December 1945 to April 1946 remains a dark chapter in Aceh's history.

The lack of a comprehensive perspective on the roots of conflict in the origin of the nationalist concept in Aceh has resulted in historical conflict amnesia and anomalies in the strategy of democratic development in Aceh [Flores, Nooruddin, 2012]. The unresolved conflict resolution has led to victimization, highlighting that democracy established in Aceh post-Helsinki MoU operates with negative dialectics. This fragility is also evident in the weak concept of Special Autonomy for Aceh, lacking inspiration for local leadership.

One crucial issue in uncovering the Cumbok tragedy is the absence of an empathetic politics of memory that works comprehensively to unveil the facts of the past. Several references and books, as mentioned above, indicate distortions that further extend the space of victimization to the conflict victims of that time. However, politics of memory serves as a means to rectify socially and politically flawed spaces left by conflicts, as post-conflict historical production becomes a way to construct a national political identity by the victorious and powerful groups (most literature on memory and politics focuses on the construction, reproduction, and contestation of national identities) [Bell, 2006].

Bell's thesis provides evidence in numerous case studies of regions affected by conflict, such as Latvia [Gibson, 2016], Romania [Tismaneanu, 2008], Poland [Fabiś, Wawrzyniak, Chabior, 2015], or Ireland [Pine, 2010]. These areas not only experienced chaos in the formation of their national identity but also faced challenges in building democratization movements due to memorialization and biased historical narratives that neglected the communities victimized by the conflicts. Concerning national historical context, distortions resulting from conflicts, such as the trauma of the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) or the 1965–1966 conflict have been extensively discussed [Anderson, McVey, 2009; Roosa, 2008].

This study employed a qualitative social approach utilizing the case study method, aiming to focus on the initial epicentre of the conflict in Pidie. Subsequently, the research compares this conflict, often referred to as a social revolution in many literary works, rather than a tragedy.

Studies related to politics of memory have been conducted in various political and violent cases worldwide. However, throughout the researchers' exploration, specific attention to the politics of memory of the conflict involving ulama and uleebalang or the Cumbok war in Aceh has not been identified. This research adopts the concepts of memory, trauma, and world politics, drawing from Duncan Bell's thoughts. The concept assumes that the past plays a crucial role in shaping the contemporary world because it is impossible to escape from memory. It explores the complex ways in which memories of events, especially traumatic ones like wars, genocides, and political oppressions, can influence and construct new individual and collective identities [Bell, 2006].

Several closely related studies to this research include "The Role of Trauma and Memory in Foreign Policy: A Case Study of Germany's Policy in Accepting Syrian Refugees 2011–2015", which reveals that trauma resulting from the Holocaust creates memories that influence contemporary German politics and impact the policies currently implemented by Germany. Germany aims to improve its positive image by implementing an Open-Door Policy [Wardani, 2017].

A study undertaken in Estonia, affirms that politics of memory is understood as an effort to shape the collective memory of society and establish ideas about what can and cannot be remembered in the past [Calhoun, 1993]. The goal of this study likely serves as a framework for analyzing Estonia's language of memory politics and constraining its treatment in two crucial ways. Firstly, its focus lies on national memory politics, involving decisions by the parliament, government, and president oriented towards shaping collective memory. Secondly, only internal memory politics is discussed, meaning the political or multilateral memory relations with other states or political unions are not separately examined.

Another research, focusing on the China-Japan relationship within the context of international relations regarding the collective role of memory and the representation of the past, suggests its significance for countries internationally constrained by their history as aggressors, such as Japan [Gustafsson, 2014]. How former perpetrator nations represent the past is viewed as crucial for

bilateral relations because it can influence the perceptions of previous victims. The representation of the past in nations that were victims is seldom expressed. This emphasizes that war memory in victimized nations is highly relevant for bilateral relations as it is closely related to “ontological security” or “identity security”.

Finally, a study conducted in Ukraine revealed that the commemoration of the seventy years since the end of World War II has reinforced the existence of divergent national narratives regarding historical events [Siddi, 2017]. The rise of the Law and Justice party in Warsaw in October 2015 has exacerbated the discursive conflict between Russia and Ukraine. The current Polish government extensively utilizes politics of memory, adopting a strong anti-Russia (and anti-German) stance. In this narrative, the current Russian leadership and a significant portion of Polish political opposition are covertly accused of conspiring against Polish national interests. Concurrently, nationalist war narratives celebrating perpetrators of genocide and ethnic cleansing have become part of the social discourse in Ukraine, further intensifying debates and straining relations with neighbouring countries. Instead of serving as a deterrent to further conflict, memories of World War II have thus become a discursive battleground exacerbating current affairs.

Various research findings, including those conducted on the international stage, indicate that the trauma of past political events results in a memory that shapes a unique narrative constructed from memories of the past and lays the foundation for a better future identity [Bell, 2006]. Questions about historical memory have played a crucial role in the resurgence of political identities, triggering the proliferation of tragic civil and ethnic conflicts worldwide. However, behind this, many perceive trauma as something disruptive or unsettling, leading them to create a peaceful or tranquil mindset for the future to overcome such trauma [Fasya, 2005; Fasya, Sibarani, et al., 2023; Fasya, Yunanda, Fariadi, 2023].

This research is crucial due to the deadlock in Aceh, particularly concerning the existing reconciliation roadmap owned by the Indonesian government and the Aceh Truth and Reconciliation Commission (KKR). Although Qanun No. 17 of 2013 mandates the KKR to resolve past human rights violations in Aceh based on humanity and balanced evidence, the Cumbok case, while discussed, lacks proper instruments for resolution. This is due to being trapped in the logic of reparations, restitution, and compensation demands against groups deemed victims. The ultimate goal of this research is not to direct towards structural reconciliation demands but to provide space for a more democratic conflict narrative and historical defense through the analysis of politics of memory. This aligns with the vision and goals of the Indonesian government's development to be free from violence. Furthermore, this study is one of the priority studies for Universitas Malikussaleh, especially regarding the topic of “Civil Rights and Democracy”.

This research employed the case study research method as an effort to capture the reality of events by describing occurrences in various cases. A case study is a method in the qualitative approach that allows researchers to explore various real-life instances (whether multiple cases or a single case) over time through detailed and in-depth data collection involving diverse sources of information [Suyanto, 2005; Suyanto et al., 2020]. This approach has a long history in social science, particularly when examining cases within the research context. Many researchers utilize this method to address issues due to its popularity in providing a key instrument in analyzing the research problems at hand.

The utilization of the case study method in this research is an attempt to examine the Cumbok war tragedy case in Pidie Regency. As known, the Cumbok war tragedy has left profound memories for the victims, particularly the Uleebalang who wielded social influence in Aceh society in the past. Their generations are still recognized by the Acehnese people, symbolized through the noble glassware carried by that generation. In this study, the Cumbok war serves as the object under investigation. Using a qualitative case study method, it was necessary for this study to delve into the tragedy by capturing the politics of memory within the Cumbok war as a means of recalling and fundamentally reconstructing the previously considered lost, obscured, and concealed historical facts of the case that occurred decades ago.

Examining the politics of memory, despite its intricate and sometimes perplexing nature, is essential for elucidating the mechanisms, identities, and frameworks of the global system. How the past, particularly a distressing one, is perceived significantly influences various facets of modern global politics. Primarily, memory significantly influences both individual and collective identity formation dynamics, consequently impacting perception and political behaviours. These mechanisms are pivotal in the origination and perpetuation of group identities, as well as in comprehending the numerous obstacles to, and alterations of, those identities.

Increasingly contested is the idea that memory has begun to transcend the confines of national political communities, spreading and contributing to the restructuring of self-understanding, particularly in Europe, and even, in more ambitious interpretations, globally [Bell, 2006]. The ethical dilemmas arising from research on memory, including the concept of obligation to the past and the concept of intergenerational justice, lie at the core of some of the most urgent questions confronting both political philosophers and practitioners. Furthermore, the significant prominence of memory and trauma in contemporary culture is itself a crucial subject. The resonance implies a pursuit of one of the most intriguing, intricate, and significant aspects of world politics

According to C. Snouck Hurgronje's observations in "The Achehnese", the term "Uleebalang" refers to the leaders of their respective territories, serving as regional heads of excellence [Hasbullah, Marschner, 2015]. Referred to as kings, in Acehnese it signifies the leaders of their regions both in actual governance and symbolically. Hurgronje notes that "uleebalang" originally denoted commanders of the army, a title occasionally bestowed upon the most powerful harbourmasters who sought to oversee them and were permitted to lead soldiers in each area, while the syahbandar also vied for ultimate authority. However, this endeavour was not always successful, as the uleebalangs consistently functioned as regional rulers, judges, and military leaders in their respective territories, refusing to acknowledge any higher authority.

The Uleebalang, besides serving as military commanders, were also entrusted with leading the nanggroe or provinces by the Sultan of Aceh. During the Dutch colonial period, they referred to "nanggroe" as "landschap" [El-Ibrahimi, 1996]. They governed the people in their respective territories. In practice, they were akin to "sultans" or "petty kings" who ruled within the nanggroe, provinces, landschap, or "small kingdoms". Uleebalangs commonly held the title Teuku (for males) and Cut (for females). In the Mukim administration, they were called Uleebalangs, while in Sagoe (Sagi), they were referred to as Peutua.

The Cumbok War was a social revolution in Aceh. When differences turned profane, that's when the massacres began. Civil war trembled with anger, depicting hatred. Gruesome destruction and opportunistic theft were rampant. This is a forgotten and abandoned dark history of this land, the grim reality of Aceh that the perpetrators themselves deemed too dark, a social revolution.

The onset of the Cumbok tragedy unfolded in early 1946, primarily centred in Pidie. The intensification of this crisis stemmed from misunderstandings between the *ulama* (religious scholars) and the *uleebalang* (nobility) regarding Indonesia's proclamation of independence on 17 August 1945. The dispute between these two factions, comprised of the uleebalang and the ulama, featured distinct leaders and commanders. Teuku Keumangan led the uleebalang faction, with Teuku Daud Cumbok serving as their commander (uleebalang of the Cumbok region), while the ulama faction was headed by Daud Bereueh, with Husin Al-Mujahid as their commander.

The Cumbok War, a fratricidal conflict in Aceh's historical records, began when Aceh's ulama, led by Teungku Daud Beureueh of the United Ulama of Aceh (PUSA), saw the proclamation as something that needed to be realized tangibly in Aceh. PUSA was established through ulama consultations to unify the perspectives of religious scholars. Over time, PUSA became a driving force behind various conflicts in Aceh's history, including the Cumbok War. Some Acehnese residents who were pro-Uleebalang twisted PUSA's image, portraying it as the murderers of all Aceh's Uleebalangs. Not all Uleebalangs desired the return of Dutch rule.

The proclamation merely served as the peak moment for the conflict between the ulama and the Uleebalang in the Pidie region. Eventually, the Uleebalang, led by Teuku Keumangan with their

commander T. Daud Cumbok, clashed with the people's resistance led by Daud Beureueh and their commander Husin Al-Mujahid. During the conflict, Cumbok forces even managed to seize the town of Sigli in Pidie. However, this control was short-lived due to the mobility of the people's resistance, led by the ulama at the time, which forced the Cumbok forces to retreat to their base in Lamlo or the town of Bakti. Upon reaching Lamlo, which is now known as Kota Bakti, the Cumbok forces were attacked by the people's forces, and this rebellion was finally suppressed in January 1946. Teuku Daud Cumbok was captured and sentenced to death, while the assets left by the Uleebalang were seized by the ulama.

Describing the Cumbok incident as a tragedy is more fitting than characterizing it as a war. When considering the definition of tragedy provided by Merriam Webster, which outlines it as "a serious drama typically describing a conflict between the protagonist and a superior force (such as destiny) and having a sorrowful or disastrous conclusion that elicits pity or terror", it becomes evident that labeling it a war does not fully capture the essence of the situation. Instead, it portrays a scenario where one group is dominant while the other is subordinate, leading to sorrow and compassion for the disadvantaged group. Throughout the affected area and the historical context of the conflict, the Uleebalang community consistently emerges as the victims, never the perpetrators of crimes or human rights violations.

This issue turns into a profound tragedy as it gets distorted in history books or academic documents produced by pro-PUSA/DI TII groups [Aspinall, 2005; Satriya, Suwirta, Santosa, 2018; 2019; Sjamsuddin, 1999]. One of its weaknesses is the failure to consider the "victims" perspective, namely the Uleebalang group, and instead, focusing on the narrative from the PUSA or the conflict's winners in the history of the PUSA vs Uleebalang confrontation.

A notable finding uncovered in this data mining effort is the history tome aiming to neutrally reconstruct the narrative of the PUSA vs Uleebalang conflict [Sulaiman, Ferdian, 1997]. The historian, who met a tragic end in the tsunami, endeavoured to examine the Cumbok tragedy through a dual lens: as a memoir, signifying a politics of memory embedded within the backdrop of political strains at the time of the incident, and also through a descriptive and narrative approach utilizing more balanced sources.

One aspect reconstructed in Sulaiman's book is the prior context, or events leading up to the upheaval or tragedy's emergence, starting from November 1945 when Daud Beureueh delivered a provocative speech before around 600 youths at Tiro Mosque. The speech intertwined two pressing issues: the possibility of the Dutch returning to Aceh post-independence and Daud Beureueh's personal vendetta against the Uleebalang, which later became a subtle reality to eliminate the Uleebalang group perceived as supporters of the Dutch [Sulaiman, Ferdian, 1997, p. 125]. As an orator at that time, the ideas stemming from personal issues were also interwoven with phrases like "Holy War", "traitors", directed at the Uleebalang, and the formation of the Mujahidin Fighters.

Certainly, Daud Beureueh's actions prompted a reaction from the Uleebalang group, leading to discussions at Teuku Laksamana Umar's house about the imminent intervention by religious scholars against the Uleebalang, resulting in the eruption of a "people's revolution". Simultaneously, the Indonesian government found itself in a relatively weak position [Sulaiman, Ferdian, 2017, p. 126], unable to prevent the bloodshed inflicted upon Uleebalang families, which escalated. This tragedy originated in Pidie and spread to Pidie Jaya, Bireuen, Lhokseumawe, North Aceh, East Aceh, and Aceh Tamiang ¹.

Findings from field research revealed unique facts about Pidie, one of which relates to the hereditary control of agrarian resources by Uleebalang families ². What was observed is the existence of social strata in Pidie, possibly stemming from Hindu influences.

Pidie had a structured social hierarchy where the Uleebalang held the top position. Below them were the *Banta* (assistants to the Uleebalang), followed by the *Opas* (the Uleebalang's police), and then the *ureung ramee*, representing the general populace. Beneath the *ureung ramee* existed the

¹ Interview with Teuku Barzaini, 16 October 2023.

² Interview with Junaidi Ahmad, 15 October 2023.

lowest social class known as *Siduek kubu*, consisting of servant groups serving the Uleebalang families³. Within this lower class, known as *Siduek kubu*, they were restricted from wearing coloured attire and were only allowed to dress in white and black clothing. This limitation often fueled resentment towards the Uleebalang, resulting in widespread expressions of anger.

Conflict was partly fueled by Daud Beureueh's antagonistic stance towards Uleebalang families, particularly in the Cumbok area. These personal sentiments escalated into public fury, resulting not only in the assassination of Uleebalang groups branded as traitors but also the adoption of Pan-Islamist slogans targeting both the perceived Dutch re-colonization and Uleebalang supporters. Ahmad's analysis remains incomplete [Ahmad, 2021]. It fails to address subsequent tragedies such as the killings of women and children and cases of forced marriages⁴.

Another important aspect to highlight regarding the existence of Uleebalangs is their capability in managing religious matters. Uleebalangs are not a secular community; they also engage in activities such as distributing inheritances or *faraidh*. Uleebalangs also have a strong understanding of religion or are knowledgeable (*alim*) in religious matters. Mr. Teuku Muhammad Hasan and Teuku Bintara Pineung hold religious study sessions in their homes [Ahmad, 2021].

In contrast, the politicization of agrarian issues in Pidie has led to a distinctive occurrence known as the "*perang pageu*" or boundary conflicts among uleebalangs. Notably, recorded instances of *perang pageu* include the conflict between Ampon Pakeh and Panglima Polim regarding the ownership of Laweung. Similarly, disputes over the boundaries of Gampong Andeu and Ilot (now part of the Bila District or *Kemukiman* Meutareum) saw confrontations between Uleebalang Pidie and Uleebalang Keumangan. Additionally, clashes occurred in Pageu between Uleebalang Keumangan and Uleebalang Adan, among others. These conflicts have weakened the solidarity among uleebalangs, particularly when confronted with propaganda tactics utilized by ulama groups or uleebalang communities.

Another aspect often overlooked in the Cumbok tragedy is the suffering experienced by many families, not just prominent figures engaged in conflict like Teuku Daud Cumbok, Teuku Laksamana, Teuku Keumangan, and others. One of them is the story of the assassination of a scholar's grandfather, Cut Asmaul Husna. This woman, who works as a lecturer at Teuku Umar University (UTU), recounts the murder of her maternal grandfather, Teuku Raja Husein. Teuku Raja Husein was an Uleebalang from Busu, Pidie, but resided in Paloh Ujong Rimba (now part of the Mutiara Timur District). Teuku Raja Husein was the father of Cut Asmaul Husna's mother, Cut Ummi Kalsum. He had four siblings from both his father and mother. Their grandfather was abducted and killed by Daud Beureueh's group when their mother was of primary school age.

Following the commencement of the Uleebalang suppression revolution, Teuku Raja Husein, who held the position of Keurani (secretary or administrative head) within the Uleebalang Keumangan's prominent family, became a target. His family temporarily relocated him from the village and staged a seven-day funeral ceremony to simulate his death. This announcement of his demise was orchestrated to evade further pursuit. However, Teuku Raja Husein returned during the seventh-day ritual, and his reappearance was observed by spies affiliated with Daud Beureueh's group. Those planning to abduct him waited beneath the house, refraining from taking action until they received authorization from the owner. On the third day, a conversation ensued with women "Soon there will be no more *Pocuts*. You will become household servants. There will be no more uleebalang"⁵.

The subsequent narrative involves an attempt to apprehend Teuku Raja Husein, who had returned home. He was then taken to Beureueh, located in the middle of a rice field known as Cot Beuringen. The following day, the family received news of a murder in the area, and three bodies were discovered in the river. Among them, two were Uleebalang, and one was not. Among the deceased was Teuku Raja Husein, also known as Ampon Husein, found with his throat slit. Subse-

³ Interview with Junaidi Ahmad, 15 October 2023.

⁴ Interview with Cut Darmawati, 14 October 2023.

⁵ Interview with Cut Asmaul Husna, 7 October 2023.

quently, the community buried the three bodies on-site. The tombstone remains intact today as it has been maintained by the family. Interestingly, families of the victims narrate stories like this in a coherent and chronological manner, passed down from Teuku Raja Husein's wife to Cut Asmaul Husna's mother, and then relayed to the author. This demonstrates a resilience in the politics of memory despite the narrative distortions presented to the public regarding the Cumbok tragedy.

Another aspect revealed in this field research is the killings that occurred during the DI/TII era, spanning from 1953 to 1957. One such account is provided by Cut Darmawati, who originates from Simpang Tiga District, Pidie. Her grandfather, Teuku Arbi, fell victim to these events. He was affiliated with the Uleebalang group in the Gigieng Pidie region. According to Darmawati's testimony, individuals from the community were systematically abducted from the Gigieng region and brought together at the Uleebalang's House, which remains standing today and is owned by Teuku Muhamad Zain.

Cut Darmawati acknowledges encountering both the perpetrators and the families of those responsible for the crimes. Currently, all of them have passed away. The families of the perpetrators engage in politics of denial, but the memories remain vivid among the families of the victims. One method of preserving these memories is through pilgrimages to the families of those who were massacred by Daud Beureueh's group. When faced with the portrayal of Uleebalang families as harsh and rapacious, they inquire about the specifics of this cruelty and the assets that were confiscated. Cut Darmawati asserts that during that period, the assets of many families were plundered, leading to the impoverishment of numerous Uleebalang families.

The Cumbok tragedy, regarded as one of the largest human rights violations during Indonesia's early independence, shares similarities with incidents in North Sumatra and South Sulawesi, illustrating a multifaceted tragedy. This complexity stems not just from the misrepresentation of historical human rights abuses, but also from the persistence of conflicts that have impeded the ongoing development efforts in Aceh.

Until now, the prevailing perception has framed this case as a battle between the PUSA and the Uleebalang faction. However, a closer examination of the facts reveals that this is not simply a matter of war. Instead, it represents a tragic reality characterized by a complex violation of human rights and a distortion of the narrative. This distortion persists not only during the initial tragedy but also in subsequent years, extending into the third millennium with the continued production of history books that reinforce this misrepresentation.

The research conducted in Pidie District reveals that the truth regarding human rights violations was not confined to the period between December 1945 and April 1946 but extended into Aceh's political crisis, notably during the DI/TII rebellion. Field investigations uncovered instances of massacres targeting descendants of Uleebalang in the 1950s, particularly during the DI/TII uprising led by PUSA chairman Teungku Daud Beureueh on 21 September 1953. This suggests that conflicts involving persecution, impunity, forced marriages, and seizure of Uleebalang family assets persisted during the DI/TII era. The execution methods employed against Uleebalang groups during DI/TII were later replicated during the New Order political crisis, infamous for the mass killings of the PKI and its supporters. It commenced with the mass arrest of individuals considered Uleebalang descendants and their families, who were subsequently executed in undisclosed locations.

The study carried out in Pidie highlights the existence of intricate challenges within its socio-cultural setting, suggesting that the dynamics of violence and property seizure are more complex and pervasive in Pidie than in other eastern coastal regions of Aceh. This socio-cultural complexity is influenced by remnants of Hindu traditions, manifested through the presence of an economic caste system within the society. This system then becomes a defining factor in targeting the Uleebalang group, extending to its foundational elements.

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