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The Implementation of Special Autonomy and the Role of *Gampong* Government: A Study of *Sharia* and Religious Moderation in Aceh

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Abstract: This paper discusses the role of special autonomy and village government in Aceh in supporting the implementation of *sharia* (Islamic law) and religious moderation. The study uses empirical qualitative methods and is analyzed through the theory of asymmetric decentralization. Data were collected through interviews with key informants, namely the Islamic Law Office, Village Head (*Keuchik*), Village Imam (*Tengku Imum*), *Tuha Peut* (Customary Apparatus), Pastors, Religious Figures and Community Leaders. Related literature studies include journal articles, laws and regulations, and books. The results of this study indicate that the implementation of special autonomy, especially through the framework of village government in Aceh, has effectively supported the implementation of *sharia* and religious moderation. This support can be seen from the authority and contribution of village government to Islamic education, such as gender-inclusive religious studies in *Meunasah*, economic empowerment through the management of zakat, infaq, and sedekah by Baitul Mal *Gampong*, and conflict resolution, namely by optimizing the active role of village officials in customary justice. It can be further emphasized that this article also concludes that promoting religious, social, and ethnic harmony through inclusive programs that actively involve all elements of society, regardless of race, religion, or ethnicity at the *Gampong* level is a prime example of the manifestation of effective religious moderation. Within the framework of asymmetric decentralization, *Gampong* authority has succeeded in supporting and facilitating special autonomy and the implementation of *sharia* and religious moderation can run well.

Keywords: Special Autonomy, *Gampong* Government, *sharia*, Religious Moderation, Policy Implementation

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Abstrak: Tulisan ini membahas tentang peran otonomi khusus dan pemerintahan gampong di Aceh dalam mendukung penerapan syariat Islam dan moderasi beragama. Penelitian tersebut menggunakan metode kualitatif empiris dan dianalisa melalui teori desentralisasi asimetris. Data dihimpun dengan cara wawancara dengan narasumber utama yaitu Dinas syariat Islam, Kepala Desa (Keuchik) Imam Desa (Tengku Imum), Tuha Peut (Perangkat Adat), Pendeta, tokoh agama dan tokoh masyarakat. Studi literatur terkait berupa artikel jurnal, peraturan perundang-undangan, dan buku. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa penerapan otonomi khusus, khususnya melalui kerangka pemerintahan gampong di Aceh, telah secara efektif mendukung penerapan syariat Islam dan moderasi beragama. Dukungan tersebut terlihat dari kewenangan dan kontribusi pemerintahan gampong terhadap pendidikan Islam, seperti pengajian yang inklusif gender di Meunasah, pemberdayaan ekonomi melalui pengelolaan zakat, infaq, dan sedekah oleh Baitul Mal Gampong, serta penyelesaian konflik, yakni dengan mengoptimalkan peran aktif perangkat gampong dalam peradilan adat. Lebih jauh dapat ditegaskan bahwa artikel ini juga menyimpulkan bahwa mempromosikan kerukunan agama, sosial, dan suku melalui program-program inklusif yang secara aktif melibatkan semua elemen masyarakat, tanpa memandang ras, agama, atau suku pada level Gampong merupakan contoh utama dari perwujudan moderasi beragama yang efektif. Dalam kerangka desentralisasi asimetris, kewenangan Gampong berhasil mendukung dan memfasilitasi otonomi khusus dan penerapan syariat Islam serta moderasi beragama dapat berjalan dengan baik.

Kata Kunci: Otonomi khusus, pemerintahan Gampong, Syariat Islam, moderasi beragama, implementasi kebijakan

Introduction

Aceh, a region with special autonomous status, is recognized for its history of struggle, which acknowledges the region's resilient fighting spirit stemming from a worldview founded on *sharia* (Islamic law), long-standing history, and deeply ingrained customs.¹ Its special autonomous status, granted by Indonesian Law No. 18 of 2001 concerning the Special Autonomy of Aceh and reinforced by Law No. 11 of 2006 concerning the Government of Aceh, includes the implementation of *sharia* as a key element in addressing the aspirations of the Acehnese people.

¹Antje Missbach, "The Acehnese diaspora after the Helsinki Memorandum of Understanding: Return challenges and diasporic post-conflict transformations," *Asian Ethnicity* 12, No. 2 (2011), p. 179-201. Edward Aspinall, "From Islamism to Nationalism in Aceh, Indonesia," *Nations and Nationalism* 13, No. 2 (2007). Moch Nur Ichwan, et al., "Islam and Dormant Citizenship: Soft Religious Ethno-Nationalism and Minorities in Aceh, Indonesia," *Islam and Christian Muslim-Relation* 31, No. 2 (2020).

The establishment of special autonomy in Aceh aims to empower *Gampong* (village) government as the governmental entity most closely linked to the community, aside from fulfilling the political and cultural aspirations of the Acehnese.² *Gampong* government strategically supports the grassroots implementation of *sharia*. With special autonomy, *Gampong* has greater authority to oversee local issues related to the application of *sharia*, which encompasses social, economic, dan legal aspects.³ The presence of strong and empowered *Gampong* to apply Islamic law is a cornerstone of successful special autonomy in Aceh.

Additionally, solid *Gampong* government encourages a more participative and inclusive approach to implementation, allowing *Gampong*, with its expanded autonomy, to create policies and programs that fully represent local values and community interests.⁴ Within the Acehnese context, autonomy is expected to result in the effective and relevant implementation of Islamic law in daily life. Most importantly, *Gampong* government serves as an essential link between the regional government and the community, promoting and monitoring its implementation to ensure that government policies align with the Acehnese people's strongly held objectives.

Religious moderation is of significance not only in Aceh, but also throughout Indonesia. This is because one's interpretation of religion directly influences one's religious practices. A moderate understanding promotes moderate religious practices, whereas a literalistic or radical interpretation might result in rigid practices and an exclusive feeling of righteousness.⁵ Such circumstances might threaten societal cohesion and conflict by encouraging intolerance of differences and supporting claims of collective righteousness. Therefore, this study is essential in understanding how Aceh's special autonomy,

²Muhammad Hasyem, et. al., "Implementation of Distribution and Determination of Village Funds (Case Study in Syamtalira Bayu, Aceh Utara Regency)," *Jurnal Ilmiah Peuradeun* 11, No. 2 (2022). Dedy Syahputra, et. al., "Keberadaan *Gampong* Sebagai Satuan Pemerintahan Otonom Dalam Sistem Pemerintahan Daerah di Indonesia." *Jurnal Ilmu Hukum* 2, No. 3 (2014).

³Surya Mukti Pratama and Hario Danang Pambudhi, "Kedudukan, Fungsi, dan Pengawasan Peraturan Kebijakan Kepala Daerah dalam Kerangka Sistem Otonomi Daerah." *Jurnal Analisis Hukum* 4, No. 1 (2021), p. 120-130. Nashihul Abror. "Eksistensi dan Kewenangan Mahkamah Syar'iyah dalam Mengadili Tindak Jinayah di Provinsi Nanggroe Aceh Darussalam," *Al-Jinayah: Jurnal Hukum Pidana Islam* 6, No. 1 (2020), p. 229-256.

⁴Ayu Diah Amalia and Mochamad Syawie. "Pembangunan Kemandirian Desa Melalui Konsep Pemberdayaan: Suatu Kajian Dalam Perspektif Sosiologi," *Sosio Informa* 1, No. 2 (2015).

⁵Fadil Fadil, et. al., "Religious Moderation and Family Resilience in the City of Malang, Indonesia: The Historical Perspectives of the Islamic Law," *Samarah: Jurnal Hukum Keluarga dan Hukum Islam* 8, No. 1 (2024), p. 236. Muljono Damopolii, et al., "Religious Moderation: A Systematic Literature Review," *Muaddib: Studi Kependidikan dan Keislaman* 14, 2 (2024), p. 90-105.

particularly the role of *Gampong* in enforcing *sharia*, contributes to religious moderation and social harmony within the Acehese setting.

Aceh's efforts to implement *sharia* and promote religious moderation have been encountering substantial challenges and criticism. These include issues with conflicting central and regional legal frameworks, disparities in legal awareness and understanding across the population, capacity limits within implementing agencies, documented discrimination against minority communities, and constant human rights concerns.⁶ Nonetheless, arguments have been made to refute numerous accusations and critiques, asserting that *sharia* in Aceh respects diversity and minority groups.⁷ Still, several of the previously identified issues remain as challenges to the implementation of autonomy, especially regarding its intersection with *sharia*.

This present study centers around West Aceh by considering its unique setting for applying *sharia*, which is shaped by rich local customs and culture. This regional concentration allows for an in-depth investigation of *Gampong* government's role in implementing special autonomy and promoting religious moderation. To this end, the study aims to provide a more detailed and comprehensive understanding of the strategies, challenges, and impacts of *sharia* implementation on community life in Kuta Padang *Gampong*, Johan Pahlawan Subdistrict, West Aceh.

This empirical qualitative study analyzed its findings through the perspective of asymmetric decentralization theory.⁸ Symmetric decentralization is defined by its uniformity and commonality in the relationships between regional governments and the national political system, as well as among the regions themselves. Conversely, asymmetric decentralization is distinguished by the diversity of its content, encompassing variations in the type and scope of authority and the patterns of interaction between central and regional governments. This model captures the specificities and non-uniform relationships between asymmetric regions and the national government, as well as among government units, arising from varying levels of autonomy and authority. This approach holds not only theoretical relevance but also empirical significance for understanding its real-world implementation, particularly within the context of *Gampong* governance in Aceh. To gain thorough understanding, data were

⁶Yogi Febriandi and Yasser Amri, "Stuck in Sharia Space: The Experiences of Christian Students to Reside in Langsa, Aceh" *Al-Jamiah* 59, No. 1 (2021). Akhyar Akhyar, et. al., "Freies Ermessen in the Delegation of Authority from District Government to Village Government," *Jurnal Ilmiah Peuradeun* 11, No. 2 (2023).

⁷ Abdul Halim, "Non-Muslims in the Qanun Jinayat and the Choice of Law in Sharia Courts in Aceh," *Human Right Review* 23 (2022).

⁸Hadari Nawawi, *Metode Penelitian Bidang Sosial*, Yogyakarta: UGM Press, 2019. Gabriel Lele, "Asymmetric Decentralization and the Problem of Governance: The Case of Indonesia," *Asian Politics & Policy* 11, No. 4 (2019), p. 544-565.

gathered by means of in-depth interviews with key informants, namely the Islamic Law Office, Village Head (Keuchik), Village Imam (Tengku Imum), Tuha Peut (Customary Apparatus), Pastors, Religious Figures and Community Leaders.

The Enforcement of Special Autonomy in Aceh

The legal foundation for the special autonomy of Aceh is established in Law No. 18 of 2001 concerning the Special Autonomy of Aceh, later reinforced by Law No. 11 of 2006.⁹ Special autonomy signifies providing Aceh broader authority than other regions to govern and administer its own affairs, while remaining within the framework of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia.¹⁰ Aceh, having become a Special Autonomous Region, enjoys unique benefits as a result of its less centralized administrative system than other Indonesian regions. This decentralized structure entails the central government delegating authority to Aceh, as constantly displayed by the State Revenue and Expenditure Budget (APBN).¹¹ The 2014 APBN, issued by the Indonesian Ministry of Finance, outlined a policy of transfers to rural areas aimed at enhancing regional tax collection capacity and reducing tax disparities between the central government and rural areas, as well as among regions.

The provision of special autonomy to Aceh is not merely a provision of right, it also represents a constitutional obligation essential to the wellbeing of the Acehnese people.¹² An audit by the Supreme Audit Agency (BPK) on the Regional Government Financial Reports (LKPD) in Aceh from 2008 to 2018 regarding Special Autonomy Funds identified 10 findings and 41 recommendations valued at IDR. 32.38 billion. Follow-up actions included implementing 10 recommendations, completing 15 recommendations worth IDR. 132.15 million, and leaving 16 recommendations valued at IDR. 32.25 billion unimplemented.¹³

⁹ Elva Imeldatur Rohmah. "Otonomi Khusus Sebagai Bentuk Desentralisasi Politik Pada Daerah Rentan Konflik." *Legacy: Jurnal Hukum Dan Perundang-Undangan* 3, No. 2 (2023), p. 181-198. Law No. 18 of 2001 concerning the Special Autonomy of Aceh and Law No. 11 of 2006 concerning the Government of Aceh.

¹⁰ Safrizal Zakaria Ali, "The Management Model of Aceh Special Autonomy Fund," *Jurnal Bina Praja* 11, No. 2 (2019). Wais Alqarni, et. al., "Pengelolaan Dana Otonomi Khusus Dalam Upaya Peningkatan Kualitas Pendidikan di Aceh." *Journal of Governance and Social Policy* 3, No. 1 (2022), p. 66-79.

¹¹ Wilda Prihatiningtyas, "Fungsi Gubernur dalam Penyelenggaraan Pemerintahan di Daerah." *Airlangga Development Journal* 1, No. 1 (2017), p. 43-71.

¹² Safrida Safrida, et. al., "A Study of Special Autonomy Policy and Its Effect on Aceh Community Welfare in Indonesia." *International Journal of Advances in Social Sciences and Humanities* 1, No. 2 (2022), p. 82-92.

¹³ Zulfan Adi Putra, et. al., "Strategi Pemerintah Aceh dalam Mereduksi Tingkat Kemiskinan: Kajian dari Perspektif Maqashid Syariah." *Jurnal Ekonomi Manajemen dan Sekretari* 9, No. 1 (2024), p. 46-59.

Special autonomy acts as a political negotiation approach adopted by the Indonesian government in multiple regions of the country.¹⁴ The functions and tasks of special autonomy in Indonesian politics generate a dynamic of power relations and oversight due to their reciprocal traits. In Aceh, this policy was instrumental for the Indonesian government in mitigating the rebellion led by GAM (Free Aceh Movement).¹⁵ With the political model of decentralized governance, the hope was to resolve the conflict in Aceh. Yet, the reality was that conflict continued even after the implementation of special autonomy, spanning the administrations from Soekarno to Megawati. The Indonesian government has issued regulations concerning Aceh's special privileges on at least three occasions: Law Number 24 of 1956, Law Number 44 of 1999, and Law Number 18 of 2001.¹⁶

According to Putra and Amran,¹⁷ this failure was caused by several basic problems, namely the failure to fulfill Aceh's regional autonomy rights, especially those concerning the implementation of Islamic law, the division of territory with North Sumatra, and health problems.¹⁸ Specifically, Law Number 11 of 2006 grants Aceh full discretion in several governmental affairs, including:¹⁹ the authority to establish judicial institutions free from external influence (Article 125 paragraphs (1-3)); the authority to determine its regional flag (Article 246 paragraphs (2-3)); the authority to establish a distinct number of regional legislative members (Article 22 paragraphs (2-3)); the authority to structure its own levels of government (Article 22 paragraphs (1-4)); and the authority to enact regional regulations that override other statutory laws (Article 232).

As highlighted in the preceding articles, Article 232 explicitly grants Aceh the authority to create regional regulations that can override national statutes.²⁰ This provision allows Aceh the crucial flexibility to enact *qanuns* (local regulations) grounded in *sharia*, even when they diverge from national statutory

¹⁴ Adithya Raidipa Wisesa, et. al., "Perkembangan Konsep Smart City Dalam Momentum Reformasi Birokrasi: Studi Pada Pemerintahan Kota Tangerang Selatan," *Swatantra* 21, No. 2 (2023), p. 117-126.

¹⁵ Shane Joshua Barter and Hipolitus Ringgi Wangge. "Indonesian Autonomies: Explaining Divergent Self-Government Outcomes in Aceh and Papua." *Publius: The Journal of Federalism* 52, No. 1 (2022), p. 55-81.

¹⁶Nurul Huda, et. al. "Developing a strategic model for Halal Tourism in Aceh." *International Journal of Religious Tourism and Pilgrimage* 9, No. 1 (2021), p. 7.

¹⁷Nanda Herijal Putra and Amran Amran. "Dinamika Tata Kelola Dana Otonomi Khusus di Aceh." *Jurnal Administrasi Negara* 29, No. 2 (2023), p. 192-213.

¹⁸Nurul Huda, et. al. "Developing a strategic model for Halal Tourism in Aceh." *International Journal of Religious Tourism and Pilgrimage* 9, No. 1 (2021), p. 7.

¹⁹Imania Fathu Zahra. "Implementasi Otomoni Khusus Pada Pemerintahan Aceh Dan Papua Dalam Perspektif Perbandingan." *Journal of Administrative and Social Science* 5, No. 1 (2024), p. 54-67.

²⁰ Imania Fathu Zahra. "Implementasi Otomoni Khusus, p. 54-67.

regulations. This allows for the application of Islamic Law to be both contextual to and aligned with the values and needs of the Acehnese people, while remaining consistent with the national legal framework and the principles of *sharia*.

The Role of *Gampong* Government in Aceh

The primary responsibility of *Gampong* government is to foster a democratic environment and deliver effective social services, thereby guiding its community toward prosperity, peace, safety, and justice.²¹ Democratic *Gampong* governance, characterized by participation, accountability, transparency, and responsiveness, thrives when effectively supported by equality, balance, and trust among village elements.²²

In Aceh, village government, known as *Gampong* government, is headed by a *Keuchik* (village head). According to Article 11 of *Qanun* (local regulation) Number 5 of 2003, the *Gampong* government comprises the *Keuchik* as the executive leader and the *Teungku Imum* (local religious leader) as the community's religious leader (*Teungku Imum Meunasah*), whereas the *Tuha Peut* (council of elders) or Village Consultative Body acts as the *Gampong* legislature. The positive cooperative dynamic between the *Gampong* Government and the Village Consultative Body is built upon three key elements: partnership, consultation, and coordination in governmental administration.²³ Within the *Gampong*, the cooperative relationship between the *Gampong* government and the *Tuha Peut* is crucial. The *Keuchik* and the *Tuha Peut* uphold harmonious cooperation in government administration, development, and the enforcement of Islamic Law. Effective cooperation necessitates the creation of supporting regulations.

The *Gampong* in Aceh is not merely a traditional element, it is also a deeply ingrained part of the cultural fabric, far beyond plain historical sentimentality. Therefore, equating a *Gampong* with a generic "*desa*" (Indonesian village) from a governance perspective is inaccurate and overlooks substantial differences in village governance, officials, and traditional institutions. This paradigm must shift to recognize the *Gampong*'s distinct identity from a generic

²¹ Nasrun Annahar, et. al. "The road to inclusive decentralized village governance in Indonesia." *Sustainability* 15, No. 11 (2023), p. 8616. Kiki Endah, "Penyelenggaraan pemerintahan Desa menurut Undang-Undang Nomor 6 Tahun 2014 tentang Desa." *Dinamika: Jurnal Ilmiah Ilmu Administrasi Negara* 5.1 (2018), p. 76-82.

²²Khaidir Ali and Agung Saputra. "Tata Kelola Pemerintahan Desa Terhadap Peningkatan Pelayanan Publik Di Desa Pematang Johar." *Warta Dharmawangsa* 14, No. 4 (2020), p. 602-614. Dewirahmadanirwati, Dewirahmadanirwati. "Implementasi Otonomi Daerah Dalam Mewujudkan Good Governance di Daerah Sumatera Barat: Indonesia." *Jurnal Ilmiah Pendidikan Scholastic* 2, No. 3 (2018), p. 43-50.

²³ Muh Rinto, et. al., "Koordinasi Badan Permusyawaratan Desa (BPD) dengan Kepala Desa dalam Perencanaan Pembangunan di Desa Laikang Kabupaten Takalar." *Jurnal Administrasi Pemerintahan Desa* 2, No. 1 (2021), p. 24-37.

“*desa*”. In Aceh, the *Gampong* functions as a legal and customary community unit at the lowest power level, possessing its own resources. Unlike a typical “*desa*,” the *Gampong* leadership is dualistic, in which the *Keuchik* is responsible for governmental administration and customary law (*adat*), while the *Teungku Imum Meunasah* leads in religious life, Islamic law (*sharia*) enforcement, religious and moral education, and broader social and communal affairs. This contrasts sharply with the hierarchical structure of a “*desa*,” where the village head holds singular authority.

Applying modern bureaucratic terms, the *Keuchik* and the *Teungku Meunasah* could be considered the executive branch of *Gampong* government, responsible for its organization and implementation. The *Tuha Peut*, as a representative body of community elements, strategically functions as a deliberative council, assisting the *Keuchik* in formulating and enacting *Gampong* policies. Consequently, *Gampong* government is tasked with administering governance, implementing development, fostering the community, and enhancing the application of *sharia*. A key characteristic defining an area as a *Gampong* is the presence of a *meunasah* (community hall), serving as both a place of worship and a forum for community activities.

The aforementioned arrangement highlights how traditional and religious values are fundamental to social cohesion in the *Gampong*. In terms of *Gampong* authority, Qanun No. 5 of 2003 on *Gampong* Governance, Article 14 paragraph 1, establishes that the *Keuchik* is responsible for leading the administration of *Gampong* governance, guided by policies jointly established with the approval of the *Tuha Peut Gampong*. This article clarifies that fundamental, binding, regulatory, or burdensome policies for *Gampong* residents are established through Qanun *Gampong*, while the specific implementation details of these Qanun are determined by the *Keuchik*'s decision.

Regarding the authority to establish Qanun *Gampong*, Regency/City Qanun Number 8 of 2011 concerning *Gampong* Governance, point 12 of the provisions, further clarifies that the *Tuha Peut Gampong* serves as the *Gampong*'s deliberative body. Its members are directly elected from and by the local *Gampong* community, ensuring representation from religious scholars (*ulama*), community leaders (including youth and women), traditional figures, and intellectuals within the *Gampong*. The *Tuha Peut Gampong* is tasked with preserving customs and traditions, formulating *Gampong* regulations, accommodating and channeling community aspirations, and effectively overseeing *Gampong* governance administration. Furthermore, point 25 mentions that a Qanun *Gampong* comprises rules and guidelines rooted in customs and traditions, established by the *Keuchik* with the approval of the *Tuha Peut Gampong*. Further, Article 21 specifies the *Keuchik*'s authority to propose draft Qanun *Gampong* and to enact those approved by the *Tuha Peut Gampong*.

The administration of *Gampong* government is an integral subsystem of the Province of Aceh and the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia. Moreover, the *Gampong* holds a strategic role and position due to several key attributes, including: first, its legal capacity to perform acts under public, civil, and customary law; second, its possession of assets, property, and buildings, granting it the standing to sue and be sued; third, its democratic structure, evidenced by the *Tuha Peut* (or equivalent) which accommodates community aspirations and oversees governance; fourth, its ability to establish needs-based community organizations that partner with the *Gampong* Government; fifth, its diverse funding sources, including central, provincial, and regency/city grants, community self-help, and local natural resources; and, sixth, its authority to mediate disputes among citizens and other customary conflicts.

The Role of the *Gampong* in Supporting the Implementation of *Sharia*

A. Support in the Area of Islamic Education

Education is integral to improving societal quality, and Islamic education offers an essential platform for religious development within the community. In the Acehnese context, Qanun Number 11 of 2014 concerning the Implementation of Education, specifically Article 5 paragraph 2, stipulates the Islamic and integrated organization of the National Education System in Aceh to meet educational objectives. This Qanun governs the actualization of Islamic-based education throughout Aceh, including the *Gampong*'s vital assistance at the local level.

The *Gampong* has a critical function in overseeing the curriculum of local educational institutions to assure that it is in accordance with Islamic Law values. It also actively boosts religious education within the community, particularly among youth, to develop an extensive knowledge of Islamic teachings. In addition, the *Gampong* has the authority to plan and carry out informal Islamic teaching endeavors. *Gampong* also actively promotes religious awareness within their communities through regular Qur'anic recitations, Qur'anic exegesis meetings, and *da'wah* (Islamic outreach) training. These initiatives aim to deepen religious knowledge and Sharia awareness among *Gampong* residents, thereby facilitating the optimal implementation of Islamic Law in all facets of life, including education.

In formal education, the *Gampong* actively advocates for the incorporation of Islamic law into the general curriculum offered in local schools. The *Gampong* collaborates with the education office and religious institutions to ensure that Islamic religious instruction receives proper and relevant emphasis in daily life. Additionally, the *Gampong* plays a vital role in facilitating access to qualified religious teachers, who act as both educators and moral guides for the community. This support is crucial for the effective and sustainable implementation of Islamic education across all levels of society.

In Kuta Padang *Gampong*, Islamic education is structured into separate recitations for women and men. The *Keuchik* of Kuta Padang *Gampong* explained, “For Islamic education here in our *Gampong*, we have separate *pengajian* (religious study) groups for men and women. Women’s *pengajian* takes place every Friday after Friday prayers. For the men, it is held every Saturday after the *Subuh* (dawn prayer). We call the activity ‘coffee morning’—so while listening to a religious lecture, we also enjoy coffee together at the mosque. Alhamdulillah, the community is enthusiastic, and a large number of people participate. In addition to encouraging congregational *Subuh* prayer, it provides an opportunity to learn more about religion. It normally ends about seven in the morning. This has become a regular *Gampong* activity, hence the money from the *Gampong* for this religious study varies depending to the community’s monthly deliberations.”²⁴

This initiative not only enhances religious knowledge, but it also actively revives the spirit of congregational *Subuh* prayers, typically concluding around seven in the morning. The material covered in these Qur’anic recitations generally focuses on two key areas: tenets of faith (*aqidah*) and Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*). According to the *Teungku Imum*, “The topic matter of the *pengajian* sessions we normally provide focuses mostly on *aqidah* and *fiqh*, so that the community understands more about the religion’s principles. The *ustadz* (religious teachers) that lead the sessions are diverse—some are originally from our *Gampong*, while others are invited from outside, such as STAIN and UTU. This allows for a more diverse and in-depth selection of topics. In addition to theological studies, the mosque in *Gampong* Kuta Padang offers additional educational programs, such as training on *tahjiz mayit* – how to handle the deceased, from washing to the funeral prayers. Since this is a *fardhu kifayah*, it’s important for us to teach these skills to the community so that we always have people who are capable and ready to assist when needed.”²⁵

In line with that, the Islamic Sharia Service also supports the education program based on sharia by providing assistance for religious study centers and religious study groups, and strengthening and training religious study teachers and providing books, books and supporting facilities for children's learning in the village. In addition, we also support religious study and routine preaching activities involving local figures. So that religious education in the form of religious study, preaching, and lectures can run well in Aceh.²⁶

This initiative is a routine part of *Gampong*'s commitment in Aceh to support Islamic education for the community. In addition to this activity having an impact on increasing religious understanding and Islamic education

²⁴ Interview with SFR, *Keuchik* of Kuta Padang, West Aceh, November 12, 2024.

²⁵ Interview with TJN, *Teungku Imum*, Kuta Padang, West Aceh, April 2025.

²⁶ Interview with MAB, Staff of the Aceh Islamic Sharia Service, April 2025.

intellectually and spiritually, it can also help strengthen social ties among residents through a family atmosphere. The high enthusiasm of the community shows the effectiveness and relevance of the program to the intellectual and spiritual needs of the peoples.

B. Support in the Area of Economic Empowerment

Under its special autonomy, Aceh implements *sharia*, which includes the regulation of Sharia economics at the *Gampong* level. The Baitul Mal is the key institution responsible for managing religious funds such as *zakat* (obligatory charity), *infaq* (voluntary charity), *sadaqah* (voluntary alms), and *waqf* (Islamic endowment). This authority is formalized under Aceh Qanun Number 10 of 2007 concerning Baitul Mal, assigning responsibility to the *Gampong* for the transparent management and distribution of these funds in accordance with Sharia principles.

Equipped through the Baitul Mal, each *Gampong* can utilize *zakat* and *infaq* to improve the lives of the poor and less fortunate in its the community. In addition, the *Gampong*'s Baitul Mal is also responsible for the administration of *waqf* and other religious assets. This authority is further defined by Aceh Qanun Number 10 of 2018 concerning Baitul Mal, granting *Gampong* the autonomy to regulate the utilization of *waqf* land and its yields for the benefit of the local populace. At the *Gampong* level, *waqf* administration is focused on improving community welfare through significant economic activities such as empowering local micro-enterprises and developing essential public infrastructure. Therefore, the Baitul Mal within the *Gampong* functions as a centerpiece of Sharia economics, enabling greater economic self-reliance within the community while guided by Islamic precepts.

Additionally, within its own area the *Gampong* in Aceh actively participates in the implementation of Sharia-based economic empowerment initiatives. In order to provide the community with thorough guidance, especially in the Sharia-compliant administration of small and medium-sized enterprises, the Baitul Mal works in conjunction with other Islamic economic institutions. This authority is legally established under Aceh Qanun Number 11 of 2018 concerning Sharia Financial Institutions, which actively promotes the application of the Sharia economic system across all sectors, including at the *Gampong* level. In this capacity, *Gampong* serves as key drivers in fostering a sustainable and inclusive Islamic economy, yielding significant benefits for the well-being of the Acehnese people. Specifically, within Kuta Padang *Gampong*, economic empowerment initiatives related to *zakat* and *infaq* are managed directly by the Kuta Padang Baitul Mal. According to the *Keuchik* of Kuta Padang regarding the management of *zakat* and *infaq*, "*Alhamdulillah*, we have established our own *Gampong* Baitul Mal in *Gampong* Kuta Padang. This means there is a dedicated body responsible for managing *zakat* and *infaq*, independent from the village government

apparatus. To this day, we continue to entrust all *zakat* matters to the Baitul Mal due to its transparent practices. The incoming *zakat* funds and their distribution are visible to the community, especially since the distribution typically takes place at the beginning of the year. For coordination between the *Gampong* and the Baitul Mal, we utilize a WhatsApp group, which has made the process of data collection and coordination more efficient and timelier. Nevertheless, we do face some challenges. One major issue is the community's understanding of *zakat*. Many still believe that *zakat* should be calculated based on profit, whereas in Islamic teachings, the obligation to pay *zakat* is based on accumulated wealth, not business profits or losses."²⁷

The *zakat* and *infaq* management system in Kuta Padang *Gampong* is centralized within Baitul Mal *Gampong*, a self-governing entity that has fostered community trust through transparent operational procedures, as evidenced by the annual distribution at the beginning of the fiscal year. Inter-institutional coordination between the *Gampong* apparatus and the Baitul Mal is facilitated by the use of a digital communication tool, especially WhatsApp, which accelerates the efficiency of beneficiary data collection. Still, two main challenges remain. First, there remains a widespread misunderstanding within the community regarding the proper calculation of *zakat*. A significant number of individuals continue to perceive *zakat* as being applicable solely to business profits, whereas Islamic jurisprudence clearly stipulates that *zakat* is an obligation based on one's total wealth or assets. Second, challenges also arise in the collection process. Approximately 70% of the workforce in Kuta Padang consists of non-native residents who typically direct their *zakat* contributions to their respective hometowns rather than to the *Gampong* in which they are employed. Despite these constraints, the *zakat* that is successfully collected continues to be allocated to eligible native residents of Kuta Padang *Gampong*. With regard to the transparency of *zakat* distribution, a local resident remarked, "So far, we've seen that the distribution of *zakat* in the *Gampong* is truly transparent. Everyone can see who the recipients are and when the distribution takes place, which is usually at the beginning of the year. We also appreciate that the *zakat* is not only used for daily necessities that are quickly consumed, but some of it is also given as capital to support small businesses. This makes the benefits last longer. Because of that, we're even more motivated to support the *zakat* program, as its impact can really be felt in the community."²⁸

The interview above shows that the local community has a favorable opinion on *zakat* management in Kuta Padang *Gampong*, which is seen to be transparent and well-targeted. Local people are also well-informed about the identity of *zakat* recipients and the timing of distribution, which typically occurs

²⁷ Interview with SFR, Keuchik of Kuta Padang, West Aceh, November 2024.

²⁸ Interview with EJT, Local of Kuta Padang, West Aceh, April 2025.

at the beginning of the year. Moreover, the *zakat* distributed is not limited to fulfilling immediate consumption needs, but it is also utilized as additional capital to support small-scale businesses. This approach enhances the long-term impact of *zakat* and contributes to the community's economic empowerment.

In Kuta Padang *Gampong*, *sharia* provides as a fundamental framework for economic empowerment, particularly through the transparent and accountable handling of *zakat* and *infaq* by the Baitul Mal *Gampong*. This management system not only provides consumptive aid for the residents in need, but it also supports productive initiatives by offering capital for small-scale businesses. Despite existing challenges—particularly in public understanding of *zakat mal* (wealth zakat), which is often mistakenly perceived as an obligation based on profit rather than total wealth—continuous educational efforts are undertaken by religious leaders through community religious gatherings and Friday sermons. The collaboration among the *Gampong* apparatus, the Baitul Mal, and religious figures demonstrates that the implementation of Islamic law in this context extends beyond spiritual dimensions. It plays a crucial role in fostering a fair, inclusive, and sustainable local economic system at the village level.

C. Support in the Areas of Conflict Resolution and Peace

Given Aceh's special autonomous status, *Gampong* holds significant authority in promoting peace and resolving conflicts within their jurisdictions by implementing *sharia*. This includes their essential function as the primary point of intervention in local disputes, employing both customary customs and Islamic legal frameworks. The *Gampong*, guided by traditional and religious leaders like the *Imum Mukim* and *Tuha Peut*, mediates community conflicts by prioritizing deliberation and peace in line with Islamic teachings.²⁹ Aceh Qanun Number 9 of 2008 on the Development of Customary Life and Traditions regulates the *Gampong*'s role in dispute resolution according to custom, grounded in the principles of justice and Islamic brotherhood.³⁰

Additionally, *Gampong* also holds authority to facilitate post-conflict reconciliation, especially in communal or familial disputes. Utilizing traditional and religious institutions, *Gampong* plays a vital role in bridging divides and rebuilding social cohesion within the community. The *Gampong*, in this capacity, takes a leading role in the local application of Islamic Law for social cohesion and conflict resolution, providing a less protracted alternative to formal legal channels. This approach aligns with core Islamic principles of conflict resolution, known as *ishlah* (reconciliation) and mutual forgiveness.

²⁹ Faisal Husen Ismail, et. al., "Customary and Islamic Practices in Inheritance Distribution: Insights from The *Gampong* Customary Court in Pidie," *al-Risalah* 24, No. 2 (2024).

³⁰ Aceh Qanun No. 9 of 2008 concerning the Development of Customary Life and Traditions.

The primary mechanism for conflict resolution in Kuta Padang *Gampong* is the Village Customary Court, responsible for adjudicating disputes involving all residents, including newcomers. As explained by the *Keuchik* of *Gampong* Kuta Padang, “When settling disputes in Kuta Padang *Gampong*, we always prioritize a family-based approach and employ the village’s customary court. For example, in cases of juvenile misconduct that disrupts public order, disturbances during Ramadan, inheritance disputes, or even episodes of domestic abuse, we seek settlement through customary deliberation. This approach brings together community leaders and *Gampong* officials to assure that a fair and culturally based solution can be reached without resorting to formal legal proceedings. However, if the issue is severe or cannot be settled by conventional or familial means, only then do we refer it to the authorities.”³¹

Conflict resolution in the *Gampong* will prioritize customary deliberation and a familial approach. Issues ranging from juvenile delinquency and public order during Ramadan to inheritance disputes and domestic violence are firstly addressed by the village customary court, involving community and *Gampong* leaders, aiming for equitable resolutions outside the formal legal system. However, intractable or severe cases are referred to the police.

The *Tuha Peut*, who stressed the importance of customary and familial approaches to conflict resolution in Kuta Padang *Gampong*, explained that, “In Kuta Padang *Gampong*, we always put emphasis on resolving issues through traditional deliberation and a familial approach. We strongly believe that this method is more effective and appropriate because it emphasizes the values inherent in our community. In many cases, such as juvenile delinquency, maintaining order during the month of Ramadan, inheritance disputes, and even more sensitive issues like domestic violence, we strive to resolve them internally through the village’s customary justice system first. We choose for traditional and familial approaches because we think that social and cultural norms within our society should be used to solve problems rather than only legal frameworks. When issues are viewed from a familial perspective, the parties are frequently more receptive to communication and more eager to work together to find a solution. This is essential for preserving positive ties amongst village people and averting more serious disputes. Additionally, compared to involving outside parties like the police or courts, the traditional deliberation process is faster and more economical.”³²

Conflict resolution in the *Gampong*, based upon customary deliberation and a family-centered approach that involve community and *Gampong* officials, seeks not only to resolve disputes fairly, but also to facilitate reconciliation and encourage offenders to admit wrongdoing, particularly in cases of juvenile

³¹ Interview with SFR, Keuchik of Kuta Padang, Meulaboh, 2024.

³² Interview with IKD, Tuha Peut of Kuta Padang, West Aceh, November 12, 2024.

delinquency and broader social problems. Incorporating social and cultural values, the customary deliberation process is a more efficient, timely, and cost-effective method of conflict resolution than police or judicial intervention, which benefits communal harmony while also offering individuals with opportunities for positive personal development.

The Role of the *Gampong* in Realizing Religious Moderation

Within Aceh's unique setting, religious moderation is an interplay of national values, nationalism, and essential Islamic teachings under the Sharia umbrella. While some may continue to misinterpret its meaning, it is the duty of government administrators at all levels, from national to *Gampong*, to effectively convey and promote a shared understanding of religious moderation. In Kuta Padang, West Aceh Regency, the *Religious Moderation Gampong* functions as a derivative of the more comprehensive *Gampong Pancasila* framework.

The multi-ethnic, multi-religious, and multi-tribal composition of Indonesia represents a significant national asset that needs to be wisely cultivated. Kuta Padang *Gampong* shows a tangible example of successful harmonious diversity management. Initiating a food and tourism area development program in 2021, this *Gampong's* community effectively fostered a remarkable sense of togetherness through their strong commitment to *gotong royong* (mutual cooperation). In a significant affirmation of its citizens' commitment to diversity, Kuta Padang *Gampong* was honored with the title of *Gampong Pancasila* at the end of 2023, a recognition that underscores its exemplary management of societal differences.

The route to becoming a religious moderation *Gampong* began with the 2021 food and tourism program. The creation of a combined garden and tourism space resulted in the massive formation of *gotong royong* among the community's different tribal, cultural, and religious members. Observing the strong sense of unity fostered by these community-led initiatives, the authorities recognized Kuta Padang *Gampong's* alignment with Pancasila values, particularly *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* (Unity in Diversity), leading to its designation as a *Gampong Pancasila* at the end of 2023. The recognition of the *Gampong Pancasila* prompted a renewed commitment of the community to preserving such harmony. Consequently, in 2024, the Ministry of Religious Affairs, through the FKUB (Forum for Religious Harmony), selected two exemplary villages, Kuta Padang and Ujong Kalak.³³

The *Moderation Gampong* represents the vivid reality of a diversified society founded on mutual respect for diversity. Khairul Azhar, Acting Head of the Ministry of Religious Affairs Office, underlined the solid and well-maintained unity among West Aceh's religious communities, both within and across faiths.

³³Interview with IKD, Tuha Peut of Kuta Padang, November 11, 2024.

A pastor from GMI Meulaboh voiced a similar sentiment about the strong interfaith harmony in the area, “During the nine years I have lived in West Aceh, particularly in Kuta Padang *Gampong*, I have deeply appreciated the spirit of inter-religious tolerance that prevails here. Relations among different religious communities, including Christians, Muslims, and others, are marked by mutual respect and support. We live side by side in harmony, and despite our differences in belief, we consistently strive to respect and assist one another. For instance, during religious celebrations, both Christians and Muslims show mutual support. We also regularly participate in joint social activities, such delivering aid to those in need or organizing neighborhood gatherings that welcome people of all religious backgrounds. Regardless of our religious identity, we feel comfortable, accepted, and appreciated, and all faiths are respected. Because of its welcoming environment, Kuta Padang *Gampong* is a genuinely cozy and supportive location for people to live and develop together.”³⁴

The previous interviews illustrate Kuta Padang *Gampong*’s distinctive inter-religious tolerance, which fosters healthy ties among Christians, Muslims, and people of any faith. Despite their differing beliefs, the community openly respects and supports one another, especially on religious holidays and joint social activities. The locals of Kuta Padang *Gampong* feel a great sense of security and belonging because all religions are consistently respected within the community. This high level of tolerance underpins a comfortable and supportive environment where individuals can live and thrive together, irrespective of their religious beliefs. The demographic breakdown of Kuta Padang is as follows: Islam 5437, Catholic 83, Protestant Christian 51, and Buddhist 230.³⁵

The motivation to nurture religious moderation in Kuta Padang *Gampong* was to build an inclusive forum capable of uniting its diverse population, as reflected in the aforementioned demographic breakdown. According to *Keuchik* of Kuta Padang, “The rationale behind this religious moderation initiative is that, fundamentally, Kuta Padang has a diverse population in terms of ethnicity, religion, and race. The purpose of religious moderation is to promote tolerance and protect religious rights. We involve all groups in village activities. The presence of multiple religions makes the concept of a *Moderation Gampong* important. We must prevent any discriminatory issues related to ethnicity, religion, race, or intergroup relations that could divide our village. That is the foundation.”³⁶

Considering the aforementioned reality, the cornerstone of religious moderation in Kuta Padang *Gampong* lies in its intrinsic demographic diversity, which includes ethnicity, religion, and race. The objective of this initiative is to

³⁴Interview with MGY, Pastor of GMI West Aceh, November 12, 2024.

³⁵Kuta Padang *Gampong* Data Report, Johan Pahlawan Subdistrict, West Aceh, 2024.

³⁶Interview with SFR, Keuchik of Kuta Padang, West Aceh, November 11, 2024.

promote tolerance, protect religious rights, and fully involve the community in various village activities. This religious heterogeneity highlights the significance of establishing religious moderation to prevent any discriminatory issues related to ethnicity, religion, race, or intergroup relations and maintain communal harmony.

As a result of this religious moderation, social interaction among multiple tribes, races, and religions in Kuta Padang *Gampong* has grown exceptionally amicable, even to the extent that some Chinese residents are able to speak Acehnese. A local resident of Kuta Padang *Gampong* shared, “I have lived here for over 30 years. In the past, many Chinese traders operated in the new market, and honestly, there were never any conflicts. To this day, there have been no disputes between us Muslims and the Chinese community. Business continues as usual, and many of our people work for them, just as it always has been. Even during community events, they participate actively, and some can even speak Acehnese.”³⁷

Social relations within this *Gampong Pancasila* are becoming harmonious and inclusive. The Chinese-Indonesian community that has long resided in the area has demonstrated a strong capacity for adaptation, including acquiring and using the Acehnese language—an indication of a positive acculturation process. The absence of ethnic segregation, largely attributed to the inclusive and non-fanatic leadership of *Keuchik*, has further strengthened intergroup relations. The strong spirit of togetherness and tolerance within the *Gampong Pancasila* community are even more apparent through the people's active participation in gotong royong and village meetings. Such remarkable sense of togetherness and tolerance in the Religious Moderation *Gampong* have greatly benefited the residents of Kuta Padang *Gampong* in multiple dimensions, including in social harmony, religious understanding, and educational opportunities. The *Keuchik* of Kuta Padang *Gampong* explained, “We organize several social activity programs that actively involve all community members. For example, during the Hoka celebration, the Buddhist community assists our Muslim children, and likewise, we provide support to them through Direct Cash Assistance (BLT) and business capital aid. In *gotong royong* activities, we involve everyone to participate together in building and maintaining Kuta Padang. We have a regular program called PGRGKP (Kuta Padang *Gampong Gotong Royong Week*), which has now reached its 98th week. And we involve everyone in that—even they themselves here proposed the ‘Clean Friday’ activity. Regarding non-Muslim religious celebrations such as Christmas, they also celebrate it here, although worship spaces are still limited, so it is mostly done in homes. They request permission,

³⁷Interview with RMH, Local of Kuta Padang *Gampong*, West Aceh, November 11, 2024.

and we grant it as long as they respect local wisdom, such as pausing the celebration during the call to Maghrib prayer or Friday prayers.”³⁸

Kuta Padang *Gampong* has fostered social harmony through a range of inclusive interfaith programs that actively engage the entire community. For instance, during the Hoka celebration, the Buddhist community offers support to Muslim children, while the Muslim community reciprocates by providing assistance through initiatives such as Direct Cash Assistance (BLT) and business capital support. *Gotong royong* becomes the key pillar of community life in Kuta Padang, exemplified by the Kuta Padang *Gampong Gotong Royong* Week (PGRGKP) program, which has now reached its 98th consecutive week. This initiative actively involves all segments of society, who also contribute by proposing additional activities such as the ‘Clean Friday’ program.

Furthermore, religious tolerance in Kuta Padang *Gampong* is also evident through the respectful accommodation of non-Muslim religious celebrations, such as Christmas, which are observed in a manner that honors local customs. Non-Muslim residents are permitted to conduct religious services at private homes or designated locations, provided that these activities do not conflict with established local traditions, such as pausing the celebration during the *Maghrib* (dusk) call to prayer or Friday congregational prayers. This practice showcases the community’s commitment to fostering mutual respect and cooperation amid its religious and cultural diversity.

The Acehnese people and the Chinese community, with their differing cultures and religions, engage in tolerant and harmonious social interaction. Such interaction not only reflects peaceful coexistence, but it also mutually enriches their social fabric through cultural exchange and sustained mutual respect and support. This sentiment was expressed by a leader of the Chinese community, who remarked, “We have experienced significant changes compared to the past. For instance, regarding religious worship, we now have a Wihara (Buddhist temple) in the new market area. This reflects significant progress in religious moderation and tolerance. Previously, Chinese residents were often subject to mockery and marginalization. Today, however, we have become integrated through intermarriage—many of my relatives are Muslim, while I remain Buddhist and some of my children are Catholic. When it comes to religious practices, there is no interference. For example, we refrain from activities during Friday prayers, and similarly, our Buddhist holidays are respected without disturbance or exclusion. During the fasting month, we observe the fast by not eating when Muslims are fasting, and we actively participate in their *kendhuri* (communal feasts). In fact, during *Ramadhan*, the vihara distributes *takjil* (fast-breaking snacks) and sells food after 3 PM. In the past, we hesitated to offer food to Muslims due to concerns about pork content, but now there is greater openness

³⁸ Interview with SFR, *Keuchik* of Kuta Padang, West Aceh, November 11, 2024.

and acceptance. Socially, economically, and educationally, relations have improved and coexist harmoniously.”³⁹

In daily life, the growing realization of religious tolerance is also apparent. For instance, the worship of other religious communities proceeds without disruption, such as during Friday prayers or Buddhist holiday celebrations. In addition, inter-religious participation has notably increased, as evidenced by Buddhists distributing *takjil* (fast-breaking snacks) during Ramadan and adjusting trading hours to respect Muslim practices. This positive development extends to education, where SMA Negeri 1, the nearest senior high school, now welcomes students of Chinese ethnicity, eliminating the previous need to travel further. These changes highlight significant progress in nurturing harmony within Kuta Padang *Gampong*.

Drawing upon the theory of symmetric and asymmetric decentralization, which acknowledges regional autonomy and specificity,⁴⁰ the context of Kuta Padang *Gampong* illustrates a model where greater authority is devolved in the management of Islamic education and economic empowerment compared to other regions. Operating within the framework of Aceh Qanun, *Gampong* enjoys considerable autonomy in governing educational institutions and religious practices, including the management of *zakat* and *infaq*. This legal empowerment boosts local independence and creates a framework for active community participation in development processes. This framework encourages religious moderation, as reflected through the widespread presence of tolerance, religious peace, and social harmonization within the community.

Conclusion

The enforcement of special autonomy, in conjunction with the existing structure of *Gampong* government in Aceh, has played an important role in consolidating both the application of *sharia* and the promotion of religious moderation throughout the province. *Gampong* government possesses the authority to actively support and contribute to the promotion of Islamic education, which includes facilitating community *pengajian* in the *meunasah* for both men and women. It also plays a significant part in economic empowerment by administering *zakat*, *infaq*, and *sadaqah* through the *Gampong* Baitul Mal. Additionally, *Gampong* government assists in conflict resolution, particularly through the use of customary courts and the involvement of local officials in

³⁹Interview with LCU, Chinese community figure of Kuta Padang, Local of *Gampong* Kuta Padang, November 15, 2024.

⁴⁰Firdaus Arifin, “Analisis Terhadap Kebijakan Pemerintah Dalam Mengatur Urusan Pemerintahan Daerah Di Era Desentralisasi Asimetris, *Progresif Jurnal Hukum* 18, No. 2 (2024), p. 208-235. Muhammad RM Fayasy Failaq and Mario Agridama SW Madjid, “Inovasi dan Rekonstruksi Undang-Undang Sektorial Daerah untuk Desentralisasi Asimetris, *Matra Pembaruan* 7, No. 2 (2023), p. 75-86.

deliberations that adhere to local customs and communal values. Kuta Padang *Gampong* has also successfully fostered religious moderation by nurturing social, religious, and ethnic harmony through inclusive programs that engage all segments of the community, regardless of ethnic, religious, or racial backgrounds. While differences in religious practices and viewpoints persist, the spirit of unity and mutual respect remains strong. This reflects the effective implementation of religious moderation at the village level, where diversity is embraced as a foundation for peaceful coexistence and community development. In general, applying asymmetric decentralization in *Gampong* not only reinforces local autonomy, but it also enhances the community's quality of life through Sharia-based economic empowerment and conflict resolution mechanisms rooted in customary practices and *sharia*. This model of decentralization reflects the central government's recognition and accommodation of local diversity and distinct socio-cultural characteristics. By allowing for more flexible and context-sensitive governance, asymmetric decentralization in Kuta Padang *Gampong* serves as a practical example of how localized policies can effectively respond to the unique needs and values of the community. This underlines the prospect for more decentralized policies, which allow greater local authority in order to improve governmental efficacy and community welfare. Through this strategy, Kuta Padang *Gampong* not only performs governmental tasks in accordance with *sharia*, but it also has the liberty to manage local affairs in pursuit of sustainable and inclusive development goals.

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