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## The Mandi Meugang Tradition as a Means of Reinforcing Religious Values in the Kute Cinta Damai Community, Aceh Tenggara

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### Abstract

The Mandi Meugang tradition is a local cultural practice that continues to be preserved by the people of Kute Cinta Damai, Aceh Tenggara Regency, to this day. This tradition is considered important because it is believed to bring blessings and spiritual purification before the arrival of the holy month of Ramadan. However, over time, the practice of Mandi Meugang has undergone a shift in meaning and implementation due to the community's declining knowledge of its original procedures and underlying values. This study aims to describe the implementation process of the Mandi Meugang tradition and to explore the religious values embedded within it among the people of Kute Cinta Damai. This research employs a qualitative field study using a phenomenological approach. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with community leaders and tradition practitioners, as well as documentation of ritual activities related to Mandi Meugang. The findings reveal that Mandi Meugang is performed one day before Ramadan, involving several stages such as going to the river, reciting an intention, and bathing using pangir (a mixture of traditional herbs). The tradition embodies several religious values, including self-purification before fasting, gratitude for the coming of Ramadan, the spirit of togetherness, mutual forgiveness, and the strengthening of social bonds among community members. Thus, the Mandi Meugang tradition functions not only as a ritual preparation for Ramadan but also as a medium for preserving religious and communal values within the social life of the Kute Cinta Damai community.

**Keywords:** *Religious values, Mandi Meugang tradition, community, Aceh Tenggara.*

### Abstrak

Tradisi Mandi Meugang merupakan salah satu tradisi lokal yang masih dilestarikan oleh masyarakat Kute Cinta Damai, Kabupaten Aceh Tenggara, hingga saat ini. Tradisi ini dianggap penting karena dipercaya membawa berkah dan keberkahan menjelang datangnya bulan suci Ramadhan. Namun, seiring dengan perkembangan zaman, pelaksanaan tradisi Mandi Meugang mulai mengalami pergeseran makna dan bentuk akibat berkurangnya pengetahuan masyarakat tentang tata cara dan nilai-nilai yang terkandung di dalamnya. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mendeskripsikan prosesi pelaksanaan tradisi Mandi Meugang serta mengungkap nilai-nilai keagamaan yang terdapat di dalamnya pada masyarakat Kute Cinta Damai. Penelitian ini merupakan penelitian lapangan (field research) dengan jenis penelitian kualitatif dan menggunakan pendekatan fenomenologis. Teknik pengumpulan data dilakukan melalui wawancara mendalam dengan tokoh masyarakat dan pelaku tradisi, serta dokumentasi kegiatan yang berkaitan dengan

pelaksanaan Mandi Meugang. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa tradisi Mandi Meugang dilaksanakan satu hari sebelum memasuki bulan Ramadhan, dengan prosesi yang meliputi persiapan menuju sungai, pembacaan niat, dan mandi menggunakan pangir (ramuan tradisional). Tradisi ini mengandung berbagai nilai keagamaan seperti mensucikan diri sebelum Ramadhan, menumbuhkan semangat dan rasa syukur menyambut bulan suci, serta mempererat tali silaturahmi dan memperkuat sikap saling memaafkan antarwarga. Dengan demikian, tradisi Mandi Meugang tidak hanya berfungsi sebagai kegiatan ritual menjelang Ramadhan, tetapi juga sebagai sarana pelestarian nilai-nilai religius dan kebersamaan dalam kehidupan masyarakat Kute Cinta Damai.

**Kata Kunci:** *Nilai keagamaan, tradisi Mandi Meugang, masyarakat, Aceh Tenggara.*

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#### A. Introduction

Indonesia is known for its rich cultural diversity, which reflects the plurality of ethnic groups, religions, and traditions across its vast archipelago (Fazal et al., 2022). This diversity produces a wide variety of social values that guide the behavior and moral outlook of different communities. Social values are collective beliefs about what is considered good, right, and desirable, and they are deeply rooted in local culture. Each region and ethnic group in Indonesia has its own set of cultural practices and values, shaped by its history and environment. These cultural differences, when bound together by mutual respect and tolerance, reflect the nation's motto *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* "Unity in Diversity." Cultural traditions in Indonesia thus serve not only as markers of identity but also as vehicles for transmitting moral, spiritual, and religious values across generations (Muhammad, 2020).

Culture can be understood as the total pattern of human behavior that reflects creativity, belief, and adaptation to communal life. Many of Indonesia's cultural values are preserved through traditional customs such as *Tari Saman* in Aceh, *Turun Tanah* in Gayo, *Mepakhur* in Bali, *Ngacari* in North Sumatra, and *Mandi Meugang* in Aceh Tenggara. These local traditions embody moral and religious values, uniting communities through shared rituals and beliefs. According to Hasan Hanafi, tradition is not merely a relic of the past but a living heritage that interacts with the present cultural and social order. In this sense, tradition has an important role in shaping collective identity, providing moral guidance, and maintaining social harmony within a community (Liata & Fazal, 2021).

From an Islamic perspective, diversity in culture and ethnicity is part of *Sunnatullah* a divine decree that encourages humankind to know and respect one another. This is emphasized in the Qur'an (Surah Al-Hujurat, verse 13), which teaches that humans are created into different nations and tribes so that they may know each other, and that the most honorable among them are those with the

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greatest piety. The verse highlights that cultural and ethnic diversity should lead to cooperation, compassion, and mutual understanding rather than division. Within this theological framework, cultural traditions become a means of fostering unity, strengthening faith, and deepening social bonds among members of a community (Muhammad et al., 2025).

Aceh, as one of Indonesia's provinces, is particularly rich in cultural heritage that intertwines local customs with Islamic teachings. Several traditions illustrate this synthesis, such as the *Turun Tanah* ceremony among the Gayo people, expressing gratitude for a child's birth; *Nengon Lo Jeroh*, a ritual of choosing auspicious days for important events; *Meugang*, the communal feast before Ramadan and Islamic holidays; and *Mandi Meugang*, a cleansing ritual performed before the fasting month. Each of these traditions reflects the integration of spiritual and social elements, where religious devotion is expressed through cultural forms that strengthen community ties.

The *Mandi Meugang* tradition, practiced in Kute Cinta Damai, Aceh Tenggara, represents one of the most enduring local customs that combines religious faith with social harmony. This ritual, performed a day before the holy month of Ramadan, involves communal bathing in a river using *pangir* a traditional herbal mixture accompanied by prayers and expressions of gratitude. The people believe that the flowing river water symbolizes (Nurdin & Fazal, 2022) the purification of body and soul, washing away minor sins in preparation for Ramadan. Beyond its spiritual symbolism, *Mandi Meugang* also functions as a medium of social interaction, allowing families, neighbors, and even strangers to gather, forgive one another, and strengthen their relationships.

Over time, however, modernization and changing lifestyles have influenced how the *Mandi Meugang* tradition is understood and practiced. Some younger generations no longer fully comprehend its meanings, viewing it merely as a cultural ritual rather than a spiritual act. Despite these challenges, the community of Kute Cinta Damai continues to preserve the practice with enthusiasm, recognizing its importance as a source of blessings and a symbol of togetherness. The persistence of this tradition demonstrates how local customs can serve as powerful instruments for maintaining religious consciousness and communal solidarity (Fazal & Mawardi, 2021).

Based on this context, the present study aims to explore and describe the religious values embodied in the *Mandi Meugang* tradition among the people of Kute Cinta Damai, Aceh Tenggara. By examining both the ritual process and the meanings attached to it, this study seeks to reveal how traditional practices function as a means of reinforcing faith and morality in daily life. This research also contributes to broader discussions on the relationship between religion and local culture in

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Indonesia, emphasizing how local traditions such as *Mandi Meugang* can act as bridges between spirituality, social cohesion, and cultural identity in an increasingly modern world.

## B. Methode

This study employs a qualitative approach using field research as its primary method (Sugiyono, 2019). According to Sugiyono, qualitative research is grounded in constructivist philosophy and seeks to understand phenomena within their natural context, with the researcher serving as the main instrument. This study was conducted directly in the field to explore the meaning and function of the *Mandi Meugang* tradition within the community of Kute Cinta Damai, Aceh Tenggara Regency. The main focus of this research is to describe the ritual process of *Mandi Meugang* and to identify the religious values embedded within it as a means of strengthening community spirituality in preparation for the holy month of Ramadan.

The research was carried out in Kute Cinta Damai, Kutacane, Aceh Tenggara, selected for its strong preservation of traditional cultural practices, particularly the *Mandi Meugang* ritual, which continues to be observed enthusiastically by the local community. This location was chosen because it represents a society that upholds Islamic-based traditions and demonstrates a high level of collective participation in maintaining them. Such characteristics provide rich and authentic data for understanding both the ceremonial aspects and the religious significance of the *Mandi Meugang* tradition.

Research participants were selected using a purposive sampling technique, in which informants were deliberately chosen based on their relevance to the research objectives. The key informants included community leaders, village officials, mosque imams, and residents who actively participate in the *Mandi Meugang* ritual. The selection criteria emphasized individuals with deep knowledge, direct experience, and involvement in the tradition. Primary data were obtained through in-depth interviews and field documentation, while secondary data came from books, academic journals, and previous studies related to culture and religious values (Khilmiyah, 2016).

Data analysis was conducted using a descriptive-analytical method consisting of three main stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction involved filtering relevant information aligned with the research focus, while triangulation was used to ensure data validity by cross-verifying interview results among different informants and corroborating them with documentary sources. The validated data were then organized into descriptive narratives illustrating the implementation process of *Mandi Meugang* and the

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embedded religious values. Through this systematic approach, the study aims to reveal how the *Mandi Meugang* tradition functions as a medium for reinforcing faith, spiritual purification, and social cohesion within the Kute Cinta Damai community.

### C. Result and Discussion

#### 1. The History of the *Mandi Meugang* Tradition

The *Mandi Meugang* tradition originates from the Acehnese term meaning "bathing on the day of Meugang." The word *Meugang* itself derives from *Ma'Meugang*, referring to the communal practice of eating meat on the day before the holy month of Ramadan begins. The *Mandi Meugang* ritual emerged alongside the *Meugang* tradition and has been an integral part of Acehnese culture since the reign of Sultan Iskandar Muda (1607–1636). During this period, the practice was institutionalized under the *Qanun Meukuta Alam Al-Asyi*, a royal legal code governing the kingdom. The term *Meugang* means "to buy meat," and it originated as a royal initiative in which the Sultan slaughtered livestock and distributed meat to the poor. Historical records note that Sultan Iskandar Muda ordered the slaughter of twenty-six livestock as a symbol of generosity and unity among Muslims before Ramadan. Alongside this charitable act, the *Mandi Meugang* ritual was performed to symbolize purification of both body and soul in preparation for fasting.

The tradition continued during the reign of Sultan Iskandar Thani (1636–1641). Although his reign was brief, Sultan Iskandar Thani focused on strengthening Islamic scholarship, education, and cultural development rather than political expansion. Under his leadership, Aceh experienced peace and the implementation of Islamic law. The *Meugang* and *Mandi Meugang* traditions remained an expression of gratitude, unity, and spiritual renewal among the Acehnese people. However, during the reign of Sultan Muhammad Daud Syah around 1873, these practices were temporarily disrupted due to the Dutch colonial invasion that weakened the Acehnese Sultanate. Despite this, the Acehnese community has continued to preserve both traditions to this day, adapting their forms while maintaining their original spiritual significance.

Over time, *Mandi Meugang* has become a living heritage of Acehnese Muslim society, transmitted across generations as part of the broader Islamic culture of the Indonesian archipelago. Similar practices exist in other regions of Indonesia, such as *Marpangir* in North Sumatra, *Belangiran* in Lampung, and *Padusan* in Central Java. Although these traditions vary in name and form, they share the same purpose spiritual purification and preparation for the holy month of Ramadan. This diversity of expressions highlights the richness of Islamic culture in the Nusantara, where local wisdom harmonizes with universal religious values.

Essentially, Ramadan-related traditions across Indonesia, including *Mandi Meugang*, are rooted in the belief that the holy month brings blessings and

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forgiveness, and that Muslims should prepare themselves spiritually and physically to receive it. Far from contradicting Islamic teachings, these traditions embody the essence of *rahmatan lil-'alamin* Islam as a source of mercy for all creation. Through *Mandi Meugang*, the Acehnese community strengthens both social and spiritual bonds, reflecting the harmony between faith, culture, and community life.

In the context of the Kute Cinta Damai community in Aceh Tenggara, *Mandi Meugang* serves as an important medium for reinforcing religious and social values. The ritual teaches purification of body and soul, gratitude for the arrival of Ramadan, and solidarity among community members. It also embodies the connection between humanity, ancestry, and the Creator, symbolizing reverence for Islamic principles and cultural heritage. Thus, *Mandi Meugang* is not merely a cultural ritual but a living expression of faith and togetherness that continues to shape the moral and spiritual life of the Acehnese people today.

## 2. The Mandi Meugang Tradition in the Perspective of the Kute Cinta Damai Community

The *Mandi Meugang* tradition is part of the *Meugang* celebration, as this tradition refers to bathing on the day before the beginning of the month of Ramadan, which is the same day as the *Meugang* feast. The Acehnese people in general perform the *Mandi Meugang* ritual together with *Meugang*, or it can be said that the *Mandi Meugang* tradition is a procession within the *Meugang* tradition itself. Meanwhile, in the Kute Cinta Damai community, the term *Mandi Meugang* refers to a tradition carried out by the people of Kute Cinta Damai and the Acehnese community in general, one day before the arrival of the holy month of Ramadan.

Kute Cinta Damai has several traditional institutions and customary leaders who are responsible for handling all customary matters and regulations within the village, namely the *Imum* and *Si Opat*. Both of them are tasked with maintaining customary laws and resolving traditional issues. The *Mandi Meugang* tradition is considered one of the important customs for the people of Kute Cinta Damai because it is believed to provide strength and spiritual readiness to the community in carrying out fasting throughout the entire month of Ramadan.

The *Mandi Meugang* tradition aims to purify oneself before starting acts of worship in the holy month. This tradition carries the meaning of expressing gratitude to Allah SWT and strengthening social and familial bonds (*silaturahmi*). The act of bathing is regarded as an effort to cleanse oneself from all impurities and sins, both physically and spiritually, and also as a form of asking forgiveness from Allah SWT, or in other words, repentance. As stated by Mrs H, one of the residents of Kute Cinta Damai Village, this bathing ritual is seen as a symbolic act of purification before entering the sacred month of Ramadan.

*“Mandi Meugang oya hampir dis urum mandi tobat, urum-urum ara hikmahe ken mensuciken diri ari dosa, cumen perbedaen ne Mandi Meugang gere sesakral mandi tobat ikarnaen mandi tobat memiliki rukun-rukun si turah i penuhi sedangken Mandi Meugang giara. Deba jema melaksanakan Mandi Meugang karna tujuen ken bergegure.”*

(The Mandi Meugang ritual is almost the same as the repentance bath, as both have the wisdom of purifying oneself from sins. However, the difference lies in the fact that Mandi Meugang is not as sacred as the repentance bath because the repentance bath has certain religious requirements that must be fulfilled, while Mandi Meugang does not. Some people perform Mandi Meugang simply for the purpose of enjoyment.) The people of Cinta Damai usually carry out this tradition in the rivers located within Kute Cinta Damai as a symbol of awareness of togetherness and social harmony (silaturahmi). Based on the place of its implementation, some residents also perform this ritual outside the village, such as at the Water Boom in Pante Timur, the Lawe II Waterfall, and Ketambe in the Gunung Leuser area. The implementation of the Mandi Meugang tradition in the village of Cinta Damai has been carried out since ancient times. The people of Cinta Damai regard this bathing activity as a sacred tradition that must be preserved. One of the residents of Cinta Damai, Deleng, stated that this tradition is also understood as an activity of cleansing the body by bathing in the river and using several natural ingredients or herbal mixtures as cleansing materials.

*“Awal mulae Mandi Meugang ara i kampong ni pertama kerna letak Kute Cinta Damai ni iringen arus sungai liket kerna sebab oya tampa i sengeje rum tampa arae kesepakatan murum-murum untuk melakukan kegiatan Mandi Meugang masyarakat secara spontanitas buetne i kernakan Kute Cinta Damai terletak i bantaran sunge aih liket nye kemudian asbab oya pula masyarakat geh berduyun-duyun untuk melakukan Mandi Meugang istilahe dalam bahasa gayo beluh pangir ke sunge aih liket”*

(The Mandi Meugang tradition first began in this village because Kute Cinta Damai is located along the flow of the Likat River. For that reason, without any deliberate planning or prior agreement, the community spontaneously started performing the Mandi Meugang activity, since a river runs through the center of Kute Cinta Damai. Because of this, people began gathering in large numbers to perform Mandi Meugang, which is also referred to as going for “pangir” (bathing using natural ingredients or traditional herbal mixtures) in the Likat River.) In line with the above statement, Mrs. H believes that the Mandi Meugang tradition practiced in Kute Cinta Damai has existed and been carried out since her childhood, and she continues to perform it every year up to the present day.

*“Kegieten Mandi Meugang oya ngek ara sejak aku lahir nye terus ilaksana en sawah besilo mi. Tengah na kami iejeren mandi mengang ni oleh nenek-*

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*nenek ni kami tengah na, mandi megang ni mok sekedar geh niri pelin ke aih sunge tetapi ara ketentuen-ketentuen ne bewen ne unang menggunakan mungkur, santan, wewangien dan isertai urum do'a-do'a."*

(The Mandi Meugang activity has existed since I was born and has continued to be practiced until today. In the past, we were taught about Mandi Meugang by our grandmothers. Mandi Meugang is not merely about going to the river to bathe, but it also has certain rules, such as using mungkur (kaffir lime), coconut milk, and fragrances, accompanied by recitations of prayers.) Based on the statements from the informants above, it can be understood that the Mandi Meugang tradition in Kute Cinta Damai does not have a clearly known origin, as it has been practiced by the people of Kute Cinta Damai since their birth and continues to be observed to this day. The Mandi Meugang tradition is carried out as the community prepares to welcome the holy month of Ramadan. According to Mrs. E, she performs the Mandi Meugang ritual because it is a hereditary tradition that has been passed down and practiced by the people of Kute Cinta Damai as part of welcoming the holy month of Ramadan.

*"Tradisi ni ilaksanaen setiop tahune nye giara tekanan i was pelaksanaen ne tapi mehne jema merasa gih lengkap memulai ibadah i bulen suci ike hati, pikiren rum beden masih kotor, maka oleh sebab oya perlu membersihen diri lebih dahulu yaitu pada saat sehari sebelum memulai bulan puasa."*

(This tradition is carried out every year and there is no pressure in its implementation. However, everyone feels that it is incomplete to begin worship in the holy month if the heart, mind, and body are still impure. Therefore, it is necessary to purify oneself first, which is done one day before starting the fasting month.) According to the researcher, Mandi Meugang in the Cinta Damai community is considered a form of worship aimed at purifying both body and soul before entering the holy month of Ramadan. It also serves as a form of preparation and enthusiasm in welcoming the sacred month. Islam encourages its followers to bring feelings and thoughts of joy when entering the month of Ramadan a month full of blessings, also known as the month of forgiveness, when Muslims compete in doing good deeds and seeking forgiveness. Therefore, Muslims should feel happiness and joy in welcoming this holy month. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said:

"The month of Ramadan has come to you, a blessed month. Allah has made fasting in it obligatory upon you. During this month, the gates of Paradise are opened, the gates of Hell are closed, and the devils are chained. Within it, there is a night that is better than a thousand months; whoever is deprived of its goodness has indeed been deprived of all good." (Narrated by Ahmad and An-Nasa'i)

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Based on the hadith above, it can be understood that the month of Ramadan is a very noble and sacred month for Muslims. Therefore, even the feeling of joy and enthusiasm in welcoming this month is rewarded with blessings and forgiveness from the torment of Hellfire. According to the people of Cinta Damai, Mandi Meugang is considered a form of worship with the purpose of purifying oneself from impurities, meaning it serves as preparation for welcoming the holy month of Ramadan. The Cinta Damai community performs this tradition as an expression of their spirit and enthusiasm in greeting the month of forgiveness. In this tradition, they not only perform a series of rituals as a form of worship but also celebrate it joyfully, as it has become an annual custom for people to go down to the river together to bathe, share meals, and gather with their families. This sentiment aligns with the statement of Mrs. S:

*"Aku senang rum masuke bulen suci Ramadhan, kerna sebeb oyaleh kami laksanaen Mandi Meugang, mandi meungang ni merupakan sara moment si haru, kerna i moment oya sekeluarga ngumpul, saling besilaturahmirum bersenang-senang sehingga Mandi Meugang meruapeken suatu tradisi si paling isenangi i masyarakat"*

(I am happy with the arrival of the month of Ramadan; therefore, we perform Mandi Meugang. Mandi Meugang is also a touching and joyful moment because it is the time when families gather, strengthen social bonds, and enjoy happiness together. Thus, Mandi Meugang has become one of the most beloved traditions in the community.)

Over time, the Mandi Meugang tradition has gradually undergone changes. Around the 1940s, Mandi Meugang had specific regulations in its implementation, which have now largely been abandoned. These regulations included certain obligatory rituals, such as bathing with coconut milk mixed with kaffir lime juice and jasmine flowers, reciting prayers, and performing a series of cleansing rites. However, in modern times, people tend to simplify the ritual, merely bathing in a flowing river or visiting bathing places a day before the beginning of Ramadan, considering that sufficient for observing Mandi Meugang.

The Mandi Meugang tradition in Kute Cinta Damai is still widely preserved by the community and passed down from ancestors to future generations. However, there have been slight changes in how it is carried out. The current practice no longer focuses on the traditional rituals, as some community members have begun to abandon those specific elements.

Although the procedures of the Mandi Meugang ritual are no longer exactly the same as those practiced by their ancestors, the tradition continues to be preserved and is still widely practiced by the people. It has long been carried out by people of all ages and social statuses from the elderly to the young, from the wealthy

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to ordinary villagers all participating joyfully without personal or group distinctions. As an Acehnese proverb says, "Mate Aneuk Meupat Jirat, Mate Adat Pat Tamita", which means "When a child dies, a grave can be found; when a custom dies, where can it be found?" The meaning of Mate Adat is that if tradition disappears, it will be difficult to recover, for in Indonesia, tradition represents the identity of a community in a particular region.

This tradition is not obligatory, meaning there is no requirement to perform it every year. In the customary law of Kute Cinta Damai, there are no penalties or fines imposed on those who do not participate in the tradition. According to Islamic law, Mandi Meugang is permissible as long as it does not contain elements of shirk (polytheism) or contradict Islamic teachings. This aligns with the statement of Deleng.

"sebagien masyarakat walope gere urum serta kerna oya sipete budaya rum tradisi si gere identik rum kegieten keagamaan si wajib. oya kati giara larangan gih ara dalam arti kata peringeten, bagi si mera ikut silahkan bagi si gere mera ikut peh gere masalah, kerna sipete oya hukum mubah yaitu gere gere ara paksael kerna oya hanya keinginan pribadi melakukan Mandi Meugang di bantaran sungai aih liket tersebut".

(Some members of the community, although they do not participate, do so because this is a cultural and traditional practice that is not identical to obligatory religious activities. Therefore, there is no prohibition, nor any kind of warning; those who wish to participate may do so, and those who do not are also free not to. The nature of this practice is mubah (permissible), meaning it is not compulsory participation in Mandi Meugang at the banks of the Air Likat River is entirely a matter of personal choice). Even though there are no regulations that require the people of Cinta Damai to perform this tradition, it continues to be preserved and maintained by the community. This is because the tradition is regarded as a means of strengthening social ties (silaturahmi), as during Mandi Meugang many villagers gather at the river to take part in the event. This creates an opportunity for communication and social interaction among community members. The tradition also serves as a moment for mutual forgiveness, as the people of Cinta Damai who work or study outside the village usually return home to join in the event. It is customary for them to ask forgiveness from one another during this time.

This act of reconciliation is considered important by the people of Cinta Damai because, in welcoming the holy and blessed month of Ramadan, it is believed that everyone should forgive and be forgiven in order to cleanse themselves from sins committed against others. Among the people of Cinta Damai, there is a saying that when the holy month of Ramadan arrives, no one should harbor ill feelings or fail to forgive one another. This value represents one of the main reasons why the

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Mandi Meugang tradition continues to be maintained and cherished by the community. Furthermore, the Mandi Meugang tradition is preserved because it does not harm the environment, does not violate local cultural norms, and does not cause harm (mudharat) to others.

### **3. The Procession of the Mandi Meugang Tradition in the Kute Cinta Damai Community**

Mandi Meugang is indeed an activity of bathing that takes place one day before the beginning of the holy month of Ramadan, with the hope that the body may be cleansed of all impurities, both physically and spiritually. As a tradition that has developed among the people of Kute Cinta Damai, Mandi Meugang naturally follows a specific series of steps in its implementation. The stages in the process of conducting the Mandi Meugang tradition are as follows:

- a) The Community Gathers at the River
- b) Intention and Bathing Procedure

Before beginning the Mandi Meugang ritual, the first thing that must be done is to make an intention (niat). The intention is expressed at the same time as the water is poured over the body. The Mandi Meugang intention does not have to be spoken aloud; it is sufficient to declare it silently in one's heart. The intention in the Mandi Meugang tradition is considered the most important stage because every reward granted by Allah depends on the sincerity of one's intention. The intention (niat) for Mandi Meugang is as follows:

*"Sengeje aku beniet niri si telah i sunehen waktu masuke bulen Ramadhan kerna allah ta'ala"*

The procedure for performing Mandi Meugang is as follows: a. Make the intention (niat) in the heart while washing both hands three times, starting with the right hand, b. Clean the hidden parts of the body such as the armpits, navel, ears, and private parts, c. Perform wudu (ablution), d. Pour water over the entire body, beginning with the right side.

- c) Pangir

The next stage in the Mandi Meugang ceremony is bathing using herbal mixtures (Pangir). This process is unique, as the community bathes with water mixed with various spices. The mixture used consists of coconut milk combined with the juice of jeruk purut (kaffir lime) or in the Gayo language, a mixture of coconut milk and mungkur which is then blended with fragrances, such as jasmine, commonly used by the Cinta Damai community. The mungkur used is not raw but roasted beforehand to make it more fragrant and long-lasting. Bathing with mungkur is believed by the community to refresh the body and provide extra energy for performing the first tarawih prayer of Ramadan.

#### **4. Religious Values Contained in the Mandi Meugang Tradition**

##### **a. The Value of Worship/Ritual**

The month of Ramadan is a month full of virtue, during which the doors of mercy are opened wide and all forms of sin are forgiven. The Cinta Damai community believes that before welcoming the holy month of Ramadan, the body, mind, and soul must also be purified. This represents an expression of gratitude and self-preparation to receive forgiveness from Allah SWT. By cleansing themselves both physically and spiritually, people feel they can welcome the holy month of Ramadan with purity, joy, and sincerity, so that their acts of worship throughout the month can be performed with full devotion (Mikraj et al., 2025). A clean body and soul allow a person to experience more complete worship, increase faith and piety, attain inner peace, and become a better individual. In the implementation of the Mandi Meugang tradition, people come to nearby rivers and bathe with the intention of cleansing themselves from all impurities, both physical and spiritual. In fact, there is no specific legal ruling in Islam that commands bathing a day before the start of Ramadan; however, there is a recommendation for sunnah bathing, which is encouraged on every night during the fasting month.

##### **b. The Value of Obedience and Gratitude**

As explained above, Mandi Meugang is a bathing tradition intended to purify oneself in preparation for the arrival of the holy month of Ramadan. It signifies the readiness of the Cinta Damai community to welcome this blessed month. Islam emphasizes that there are at least two aspects that must be prepared before entering such a special month physical and spiritual preparation. Physical readiness means preparing the body to perform fasting optimally. Allah SWT says:

"O you who have believed, decreed upon you is fasting as it was decreed upon those before you that you may become righteous." (QS Al-Baqarah: 183)

##### **c. Moral Values**

Mandi Meugang is one of the traditions most cherished by the Cinta Damai community because, during this event, it is customary for all family members to gather and perform the tradition together. Family ties become even stronger through the Mandi Meugang tradition, as relatives who live far away will return to their hometowns to participate, ensuring that family relationships remain close and connected. This moment of reunion becomes an opportunity for every family member to forgive one another something that has become a cultural norm in the Cinta Damai community before entering the holy month of Ramadan. An informant stated:

"By forgiving one another, we can become better individuals by purifying our hearts, eliminating feelings of dislike, and strengthening social relationships.

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Through forgiveness and sincerity, the heart becomes pure and ready to welcome the holy month of Ramadan with complete harmony and blessings."

On the day of Mandi Meugang, it is common for the people of Cinta Damai to hold communal activities such as grilling fish or chicken together. During this moment, a strong sense of togetherness and mutual assistance becomes evident among the Cinta Damai community. This closeness and spirit of helping one another strengthen and preserve the bonds of kinship within the community (Asmanidar & Fazal, 2023).

#### D. Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that the *Mandi Meugang* tradition practiced by the people of Kute Cinta Damai, Aceh Tenggara, serves as a meaningful cultural and religious ritual that reinforces the community's spiritual values and social cohesion. The people of Kute Cinta Damai regard *Mandi Meugang* as an important tradition performed before the holy month of Ramadan. It symbolizes purification of the body, mind, and soul in preparation for fasting, reflecting both gratitude and readiness to welcome the sacred month. The continuity of this practice from generation to generation demonstrates the community's strong commitment to preserving ancestral traditions that embody Islamic moral and spiritual teachings.

The ritual process of *Mandi Meugang* involves several stages: going together to the river, reciting an intention (*niat*) before bathing, and using traditional herbal mixtures known as *pangir* a blend of coconut milk, kaffir lime (*mungkur*), and jasmine flowers to cleanse and perfume the body. These ingredients are not only symbolic of physical cleanliness but also serve as metaphors for spiritual purification, reminding participants of the need to enter Ramadan with a pure heart, sincerity, and humility.

The *Mandi Meugang* tradition also conveys broader religious and social meanings. Spiritually, it represents self-cleansing and renewal before engaging in worship during Ramadan. Socially, it strengthens family bonds and community solidarity. The collective meal that follows the bathing ritual serves as a symbol of gratitude and readiness for fasting, providing physical and emotional preparation for the holy month. This gathering also becomes a moment for reconciliation, where family members and neighbors seek forgiveness from one another, reinforcing Islamic values of unity, compassion, and mutual respect.

In essence, the *Mandi Meugang* tradition functions as more than a cultural ceremony it is a living expression of faith and togetherness that integrates religious devotion with social harmony. It reflects how local customs in Aceh continue to embody Islamic values through collective rituals that foster gratitude, purification,

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and kinship. By maintaining this tradition, the people of Kute Cinta Damai not only preserve their cultural heritage but also strengthen their spiritual connection to God and to one another, demonstrating how faith and tradition can coexist harmoniously in the life of a modern Muslim community.

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