

# THE LEGACY OF SPICE ROUTE: THE ROLE OF PANGLIMA LAOT IN MARITIME SECURITY IN THE MODERN ACEH

## WARISAN JALUR REMPAH: PERAN PANGLIMA LAOT DALAM KEAMANAN MARITIM DI ACEH MODERN

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### ABSTRACT

Panglima Laot is a cultural institution that has existed since Aceh became the spice route and has survived to the present era. Historically, Panglima Laot was instrumental in establishing and maintaining Aceh as a trading center in the region. Furthermore, starting in the 17th century, Panglima Laot has also consistently made essential contributions to Aceh's coastal communities, particularly in preserving the marine environment by implementing and enforcing *Adat Laot*. While most research only discussed Panglima Laot's contribution to Aceh's marine environment and the conflict management in the coastal communities with its unique customary law, this research aspires to explore the role of Panglima Laot in the context of maritime security in Aceh. By utilising the maritime security matrix from Bueger, this study found that Panglima Laot contributed to realising four critical elements of maritime security: human security, marine environment, economic development, and national security. The contribution was obtained from the effective cooperation carried out by maritime security stakeholders in Aceh with Panglima Laot. These maritime security stakeholders are the Department of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries of Aceh Province, Aceh Regional Police, and the Indonesian Navy.

Keywords: Panglima Laot, Spice Route, Aceh, Maritime Security

### ABSTRAK

*Panglima Laot merupakan sebuah institusi kebudayaan yang berdiri sejak Aceh menjadi pusat jalur rempah dan bertahan hingga masa kini. Dalam sejarahnya, Panglima Laot sangat berjasa dalam membentuk dan mempertahankan Aceh sebagai pusat perdagangan di kawasan. Lebih jauh, dimulai sejak abad ke-17, Panglima Laot juga secara konsisten memberikan kontribusi yang penting bagi masyarakat pesisir Aceh, khususnya dalam melestarikan lingkungan laut dengan menerapkan dan menegakkan Adat Laot. Sementara mayoritas penelitian mengenai eksistensi Panglima Laot hanya berfokus dalam membahas peran Panglima Laot terhadap lingkungan laut Aceh dan penyelesaian konflik masyarakat pesisir dengan hukum adatnya yang unik, berbeda dengan itu, penelitian ini berusaha untuk mengeksplorasi peran Panglima Laot dalam konteks keamanan maritim di Aceh. Dengan menggunakan matriks keamanan maritim dari Bueger, penelitian ini menemukan fakta bahwa Panglima Laot berkontribusi besar dalam mewujudkan empat elemen penting keamanan maritim: keamanan manusia, lingkungan laut, pembangunan ekonomi, dan keamanan nasional. Kontribusi tersebut diperoleh dari kerjasama efektif yang dilakukan oleh pemangku kepentingan keamanan maritim di Aceh bersama dengan Panglima Laot. Adapun pemangku kepentingan dalam konteks keamanan maritim tersebut adalah Dinas Kelautan dan Perikanan Provinsi Aceh, Kepolisian Daerah Aceh, dan TNI Angkatan Laut.*

Kata kunci: Panglima Laot, Jalur Rempah, Aceh, Keamanan Maritim

### INTRODUCTION

Discussions about the relevance of ancient culture in navigating the problems of the contemporary world are exciting issues to pay attention to (Ayatrohaedi, 1986; Naess, 2013; Reyes-García & Benyei, 2019). While ancient culture is generally and naively considered outdated by modern

society, on the contrary, ancient culture itself is sometimes the answer to today's problems. The culture here plays a beneficial role for the present epoch that stands with all the existing complexities. One form of this solutive culture is found, for example, in the existence of the Baduy

Tribe in Banten. The Baduy has a concept and practice of nature conservation. This tribe can manage forests effectively and sustainably while creating *Leuwung Kolot* as a conservancy and sacred forest area. Moreover, according to their belief, the Baduy has a duty to maintain world harmony (Suparmini et al., 2013).

While the Baduy has a central role in preserving the terrestrial environment, in Aceh, there is Panglima Laot who focuses more on preserving the marine environment. Panglima Laot is a cultural institution that has existed since Sultan Iskandar Muda came to power in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, and the Islamic kingdom of Aceh became the important spice route. While in the past, both local and international traders visited Aceh for several purposes, Panglima Laot played the crucial roles: export-import facilitator, taxes and duties collector, as well as the guardian of the coastal area (see Abdullah et al., 2006; Bustamam-Ahmad, 2017). Thus, it can be said that Panglima Laot is an inseparable part of the glorious history of the spice route in Aceh. In the modern Aceh, Panglima Laot focuses on enforcing *Adat Laot* (customary law of the sea) (Kelana, 2018; Kurniawan, 2008). They work in managing fishery resource extraction and conflict resolution in fishing villages in Aceh (Puspita, 2017). This cultural practice creates a pattern of sustainability in the exploitation of fisheries resources so that the marine environment in Aceh is well maintained (Rudi et al., 2008).

This research will not discuss how Panglima Laot has succeeded in having a crucial impact on contemporary problems, especially in the context of the preservation of the marine environment and resolving disputes between the coastal communities. Much research on this model has been widely carried out (see, for example, Abdullah, 2012; Kelana, 2018; Muanzir & Mujiburrahman, 2021; Puspita, 2017; Wilson & Linkie, 2012). However, with the dominance of the literature regarding Panglima Laot, which is only limited to these two overwhelming themes, it will ignore Panglima Laot's other important roles, for example, in terms of maritime security. Panglima Laot's role in protecting the marine environment, which has an impact on the creation

of the blue economy in Aceh, for example, is separated from the analysis of researchers. In fact, the blue economy is part of Bueger's maritime security matrix (Bueger, 2015).

Hence, this study aims to analyse the contributions of Panglima Laot in maritime security in Aceh. The structure of this research would be as follows: firstly, we examine Panglima Laot as a legacy of the glorious history of Aceh as a spice route. Secondly, we explore the role of Panglima Laot in maritime security in the modern Aceh by explaining how Aceh-based maritime security stakeholders view Panglima Laot. The maritime security stakeholders that will be investigated are government agencies such as the Department of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries of Aceh Province, the Aceh Regional Police, and the Indonesian Navy.

## RESEARCH METHODS

This research employs the descriptive qualitative method and applies data collection techniques in the form of in-depth interviews and literature studies. The literature studies are helpful in understanding Panglima Laot in the pre-modern Aceh while explaining that this institution is a precious legacy from the spice route. The literature studies are also essential to explore the role of Panglima Laot in maritime security in modern Aceh based on several written sources such as news, journals, and books. This research also uses the purposive sampling method to determine the research sample. According to Sugiyono (2018), purposive sampling is a method of determining research samples by looking at specific considerations of the subject and object of research, which aims to make the data obtained later more representative. Accordingly, as this research revolves around maritime security, we decided to choose several governmental agencies working for this issue: Department of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries of Aceh Province, the Aceh Regional Police, and the Indonesian Navy. This study will examine primary data from in-depth interviews, which are very beneficial to deeply explore the research problem and better understand the perspective of selected respondents from the agencies above.

These interviews were conducted with structured questions to obtain strong data coherence.

### Understanding Maritime Security

To analyse the role of Panglima Laot in maritime security in Aceh, the first thing that needs to be done is to explain the concept of maritime security itself. This is necessary to explain what role Panglima Laot plays in the broad scope of the maritime security concept. Not only that, but an explanation of the concept of maritime security will also be helpful in mapping the stakeholders responsible for the maritime security sector in Aceh, who will then be asked for their perspectives on the role of Panglima Laot.

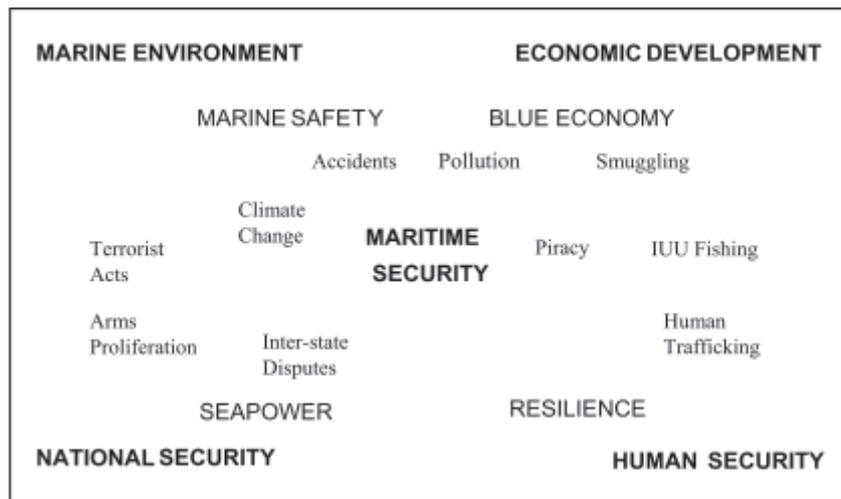
It can be said that the concept of maritime security is new in the study of International Security. It first appeared in the 1990s; academics and practitioners began to pay attention to the term ‘maritime security’ due to the increasing awareness of the rise of terrorism at sea that spread in the 2000s. The existence of crimes that occur at seas, such as people smuggling, which can lead to slavery and even murder, piracy in Somalia and the Malacca Strait, the emergence of the concept of blue economy, and the issue of preserving the marine environment and the management of the natural resources available in it, also influenced the growing concerns on the discourse on ‘maritime security’ (Bueger, 2015). Interests in the discourse on ‘maritime security’ also significantly grow when it is associated with unresolved maritime territorial disputes, which occur massively in this century, such as the conflict in the South China Sea (Bueger & Edmunds, 2017). This conflict certainly makes countries in the world, especially countries in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) region, prioritise the alertness on their sea areas because they are dealing with great and dominant powers (Sato, 2013).

Although the term ‘maritime security’ has gained massive attention in the international community, there is no rigid and rigorous concept regarding ‘maritime security.’ This condition is possible because the term ‘maritime security’ is constructed differently by each actor from various fields such as maritime policy, ocean governance,

and international security (see, for example, Keliat, 2009). For some actors, maritime threats or problems are only interpreted through the lens of their interest. The military, especially the Navy, has the possibility to understand ‘maritime security’ as an effort to defend the country’s sovereignty at sea from foreign intervention and the view that the economic dimension is not included in it. On the other hand, institutions that focus on marine-based economic development do not see the issue of human trafficking, drug smuggling, or arms proliferation as part of ‘maritime security’. Bureaucratic barriers and the actor’s interests eventually lead to an unsynchronized understanding of maritime security discourse.

Bueger (2015) then proposed the maritime security matrix, which would later be used as the basis for analysis in this research. Bearing in mind the fact that every actor involved in the maritime world has different aspirations and perspectives, Bueger seeks to make maritime security an inclusive concept. It means the concept of maritime security has an obligation to become a framework by which “one can grasp the commonalities and disagreements that the concept of maritime security entails.” After analysing various perspectives and aspirations of actors with interests in maritime affairs, Bueger categorises four main dimensions that always surround maritime security discourse: economic development, marine environment, national security, and human security. Figure 1 shows Bueger’s maritime security matrix.

With several considerations, Bueger incorporates the dimensions of the marine environment, economic development, national security, and human security into his maritime security matrix. In the context of the marine environment, several influential actors who have interests in ‘maritime security’ are the International Maritime Organization and the United Nations (Keliat, 2009). These actors view ‘maritime security’ as an effort to preserve the marine environment and ensure marine safety. In the context of economic development, the sea has played an important role as an economic source. International trade, the fishing industry,



Source: Bueger (2015)

**Figure 1.** Maritime Security Matrix

and tourism are very dependent on the existence of the sea. It is also interesting to note that there is the emergence of the blue economy as a new paradigm in the economy regarding the way of harnessing the sea sustainably. From this point of view, securing the sea means securing economic resources for the society as well.

In the context of national security, the issue of naval warfare, maritime power projection, and the concept of sea power are also always linked with maritime security. 'Maritime security' here means an effort to protect the maritime sovereignty of a country from threats from other countries. Bueger (2015) includes the concept of national security in the maritime security matrix by taking the aspirations and perspectives of the traditional schools in security studies who perceive the importance of defending the sea as part of the survival of the states. Moreover, 'maritime security' is also associated with human security. Introduced originally by the United Nations Development Program at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the concept aspires to refocus the security considerations on the needs of people rather than states. In this context, 'maritime security' means efforts to eliminate threats to humanity that occur at sea. These threats are, for example, human trafficking, piracy, or Illegal, Unregulated, and Unreported Fishing (IUU Fishing).

This research examines the role of Panglima Laot in maritime security in modern Aceh by

utilising the four dimensions of maritime security: marine environment, economic development, human security, and national security. The selection of governmental agencies as subjects in this study considers the aforementioned four dimensions. The Aceh Regional Police is primarily tasked with the human security dimension. The Department of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries of Aceh Province represents the economic development and marine environment dimensions, while the Indonesian Navy is in the national security dimension.

## DISCUSSION

### Tracing the History of Panglima Laot: The Legacy of Spice Route

In this section, the history of Panglima Laot will be explained comprehensively through its historical trajectory from the establishment of this institution to modern times. Panglima Laot here will be seen as a legacy of the development of Aceh as a glorious spice route in the region. From this explanation below, it can be seen that Panglima Laot is an undivided part of Aceh's distinguished history, and their duties have evolved over time. This change in the duties of Panglima Laot cannot be separated from the historical dynamics that occurred in Aceh and also the process of the independence of Indonesia.

Historically, Panglima Laot has existed since Sultan Iskandar Muda (1607–1636) came to

power (Abdullah et al., 2006). Unlike its current role, Panglima Laot, at that time, was tasked with mobilising war against the invaders and collecting taxes from ships that stopped at the ports of Aceh (Abdullah, 2012). Not only that, this institution played a role in the export and import process in the Aceh region. Holleman et al. (1981) noted Van Vollenhoven's explanation:

There is a great deal of variety in Acehese official dom. Next to the chief, one may find a relative called his *Banta* or helper, being more less what, before 1900. There are mukim headmen and the tetrarchs and *Waki* or deputies in the dependencies. At the ports, those 'centres of relative civilisation and wealth in all Malay countries', are the *Syahbandar* (*Harbourmaster*); at the estuaries a *Kepala Krueng* to keep the waterway room open, and a *Pawing Krueng* to maintain a ferry service from which the headman shared the remuneration; at market places on the east coast *haria* to collect dues, and *Panglima La'ōt* for export and import; *Panglima Prang* (military commanders) to collect wage and taxes in peacetime.

The existence of Panglima Laot cannot be separated from the geographical fact that Aceh is located in the westernmost region of Indonesia and makes it an area that is often visited or a place for foreigners, especially traders, to stop (Vlekke, 2008). Historically, the ports in Aceh functioned as 'meeting points' of people from inside and outside Aceh for several economic, political, religious, and cultural affairs activities. This fact is not surprising as Bustamam-Ahmad (2017) quoted Lee (1995) argument:

[A]t the beginning of the nineteenth century, (Aceh) was estimated to have about 300,000 inhabitants. Its produce attracted traders who sought camphor, sappanwood, dammar, rattan, and beeswax. Pepper and betel nut were by far the most significant items of trade during this period. Some rice, as well as horses, were exported from the (Pidie) coasts while a small quantity of gold was mined in the interior. Items imported into Aceh were opium, cloth, iron, muskets, gunpowder, various Indian piece goods, and an assortment of Chinese articles.

Aceh was once the heart of the spice route in Sumatra since the 16<sup>th</sup> century, resulting in the ports of Aceh being crowded by the comers from various regions. Not only did this spice route

make Aceh a centre of trade, but it also had a major influence on the process of Islamisation, especially on the west coast of Sumatra (Sudarman et al., 2019). This history can be traced back to when the Portuguese conquered the port of Malacca and traders began to be reluctant to visit that place. After the conquest, the Muslim traders sought a new place for their business and found Aceh as an alternative. Since then, Aceh became a place for traders to come from various places such as India, Europe, China, with pepper as the main commodity.

The development of Aceh to be the economic powerhouse in the region as well as the international trading network was remarkable. At the end of the 16th century, a high-ranking Portuguese official, Jorge de Lemos, provided information that Aceh had exported spices, gold, and various jewellery in large quantities to the Red Sea region (Boxer, 1969b). In 1585, Aceh even exported about 40,000 or 50,000 quintals of spices to Jeddah every year (Boxer, 1969a). Aceh's function as the centre of the spice route has lasted for centuries. Lee (1995), for example, mentions that several commodities attracted the local and international traders to enter Aceh, including "pepper" as "the most significant item" at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

A large number of trading activities in Aceh due to the spice route made the Sultan begin to collect taxes carried out by Panglima Laot on all ports. As a kingdom relying on "its commerce and maritime power," Aceh derived significant income from taxes levied from the area around the coast and taxes from ports (Hall, 1981). The civilisational progress of Aceh was greatly influenced by the number of traders and visitors in its ports (Hadi, 2010). In this context, Sultan utilised Panglima Laot under Syahbandar's supervision to accumulate taxes and duties. Thus, it can be said that Panglima Laot was part of the administration system at the port at that time. However, the income from taxes and duties is not fully allocated to the Sultan. As Lee (1995) explained, this condition was possible because the Sultan was still politically dependent on the existence of *Ulhee Balang* (Head of Government) and *Orang Kaya*.

Besides collecting taxes and duties from the local and international traders coming to Aceh, Panglima Laot was responsible for ensuring security so that trades on the spice route could be conducted safely. Sultan Mahmud Syah, for example, appointed a Panglima Laot “to enforce surveillance of the coast” in Aceh (Lee, 2006). Panglima Laot could be an effective instrument for Sultan to exercise his power, especially in the coastal area along with *Syahbandar*. It is interesting to note that, as Holleman et al. (1981) emphasised, Panglima Laot served as a war mobiliser during Sultan Iskandar Muda’s administration. Because of these duties, it can be said that Panglima Laot was possibly a government official and even worked together with *Ulhee Balang* in the past.

Moreover, Panglima Laot collaborated with *Ulhee Balang* had the task of upholding *Adat Laot*. *Panglima Laot* enforced *Adat Laot* under the orders of the Sultan for the sake of governance (Hurgronje, 1996). *Adat Laot* refers to customary law that applies in fishing communities in their respective customary areas and is influenced by sharia concepts born of Islamic tradition. Along with the development of the Islamic Kingdom of Aceh, Panglima Laot was then considered to be a symbol of *Adat Laot* and cultural heritage. The focus of Panglima Laot’s authority, which was initially aimed at the government’s interests, shifted gradually to the interests of the community. Panglima Laot’s duties began to develop, from merely being an extension of the Sultan’s government in the port area, then starting to turn into a regulator of all matters relating to marine and coastal matters: regulating fishing procedures at sea (*Meupayang*), setting and regulating fishing times at sea, enforce and implement *Adat Laot*, manage traditional fishing ceremonies, resolve disputes between fishermen, and act as intermediaries between fishermen and the government. Since then, the role of Panglima Laot has evolved to this day (Bustamam-Ahmad, 2017).

After the death of Sultan Iskandar Muda and the political changes following Indonesia’s independence in the mid of 20<sup>th</sup> century, Panglima Laot’s duties became clearer and outside the

organisational structure of the government. Panglima Laot no longer cooperates with *Ulhee Balang* because *Ulhee Balang* does not exist after Indonesia’s independence. Therefore, it can be said that the current Panglima Laot is different from the Panglima Laot in the past, which was the extension of the Sultan’s authority in the society. Currently, Panglima Laot grows organically and works voluntarily in the coastal community (Kelana, 2018; Muanzir & Mujiburrahman, 2021). Although Panglima Laot is outside the organisational structure of the government, Panglima Laot is still responsible to the head of the local area (Governor, Regent, Camat, Village Head/*Geuchik*) (Fithra, 2018).

The duties of Panglima Laot have evolved throughout history. During the colonial period, Panglima Laot even fought the Dutch and mobilised Aceh people for the war. It is believed that during these times, Panglima Laot had a great role in the Aceh war, although it was not well recorded in manuscripts. One of Panglima Laot prominent figures that fought the Dutch during the colonial era is Teuku Umar, whose title is *Amirul Bahri* (Reid, 1969). After all, Panglima Laot is an invaluable historical legacy of the glory of the spice route in the Islamic kingdom of Aceh. Panglima Laot had an influential role in making and maintaining Aceh for being the centre hub of international trade.

### **The Role of Panglima Laot in Maritime Security in the Modern Aceh**

This section will discuss the role of Panglima Laot in modern Aceh’s society after several transformations of its role. As a precious legacy of the well-recognised spice route, Panglima Laot still has significant contributions in the contemporary development of Aceh and even in a more diverse spectrum. While many researchers have discussed the role of Panglima Laot in preserving the marine environment by enforcing *Adat Laot* and resolving disputes in the coastal communities (see Muanzir & Mujiburrahman, 2021; Puspita, 2017; Rudi et al., 2008; Wilson & Linkie, 2012), this section focuses on explaining the roles of Panglima Laot in maritime security in

Aceh based on Bueger (2015) maritime security matrix.

In an attempt to realise maritime security on a national scale, Indonesia has several actors who play an essential role in it. These agencies were established with the aim of realising Indonesia's maritime security based on their duties and authority. Despite the fact that each actor often experiences overlapping laws and authorities, the government deliberately creates this situation in order to make the sea a jointly managed resource. However, this government's intention did not work out effectively, so finally, Indonesia rethought this joint management system and formulated a new system. Previously, Indonesia adhered to the Multi Agency-Single Task system in managing maritime areas, and now it has been changed to Single Agency Multi-Task (Azis et al., 2016). This change was marked by the establishment of the Maritime Security Agency (Bakamla), previously known as the Maritime Security Coordinating Board (Bakorkamla), based on Presidential Decree No. 178/2014, and established the Coordinating Ministry for Maritime Affairs (currently Coordinating Ministry for Maritime Affairs and Investment). With this regulation, it does not mean that the role of agencies other than Bakamla will be ruled out in realising maritime security in Indonesia. Agencies such as the Ministry of Environment, Ministry of Marine and Fisheries, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Defence, Indonesian National Police, and many others still have authority at sea but in coordination with the Coordinating Ministry for Maritime Affairs and Investment as the new regulation applies division of tasks system.

In this research conducted on a regional scale, we have conducted interviews with several agencies that are extensions of the central government in Aceh to find out the significance of Panglima Laot's role as an actor in creating maritime security. In knowing the significance of Panglima Laot, the perspective of the relevant institutions will be investigated further. The actors are the Department of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries of Aceh Province as the representation of the Ministry of Marine and Fisheries, the Aceh Regional Police as the representation of the

Indonesian National Police, and the Indonesian Navy Base of Sabang City as the representation of Indonesian Navy.

### **Marine Environment and Economic Development**

Panglima Laot is a highly respected institution in the fishing community in Aceh. Because of its presence that emerged organically from the community, Panglima Laot gained strong legitimacy and was respected in Acehnese society. With this high trust, Panglima Laot's performance has become influential in realising maritime security, especially in the context of preserving the marine environment in Aceh, which in turn affects marine-based economic development. As emphasised by the Head of the Department of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries of Aceh Province, this compliance is possible because "the community feels that the law (*Adat Laot*) is born from their close environment." This fact is not surprising considering that the customary law of the sea originates from Islamic culture, which is deeply rooted in the religious Acehnese society.

Panglima Laot's contribution in creating and preserving the marine environment in Aceh has ultimately helped the Aceh Provincial Maritime Affairs and Fisheries Service in carrying out its duties. In accordance with Qanun Number 6 of 2011, the Department of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries of Aceh Province (DKP) has the task of preparing materials and data as well as implementing activities for the conservation and rehabilitation of marine and aquatic resources, monitoring marine and aquatic resources and empowering coastal communities and small islands. This complex task can be done effectively with strong cooperation with Panglima Laot. In the implementation of the Community Monitoring Group (POKWASMAS) programme, for example, DKP collaborated with Panglima Laot because "people usually listen to Panglima Laot's advice more than village heads or other agencies."

The role of Panglima Laot is on the spectrum to regulate fishing procedures at sea or to regulate fishermen to catch fish that are environmentally

friendly and based on *Adat Laot*. This customary practice is beneficial for DKP to ensure the sustainability of fishery resource extraction in Aceh. As the Head of DKP emphasised, “local cultures that have developed in the community (Panglima Laot) highly uphold sustainable environmental values. Even Panglima Laot and the government are trying to divert dangerous fishing gear to more environmentally friendly tools.” Furthermore, in preserving the marine environment, Panglima Laot does not only work preventively but also curatively. In handling Illegal, Unreported, Unregulated Fishing (IUU Fishing), for example, Panglima Laot will solve this problem by applying *Adat Laot* and providing sanctions for perpetrators. However, suppose it is felt that *Adat Laot* does not solve the problem comprehensively and satisfactorily. In that case, Panglima Laot will hand over the perpetrator to the authorities for action under the applicable positive law. Not only that, but Panglima Laot also conserves and grows mangrove forests, which are an essential element in preventing abrasion and in the habitat for fish (Mustaqim et al., 2020).

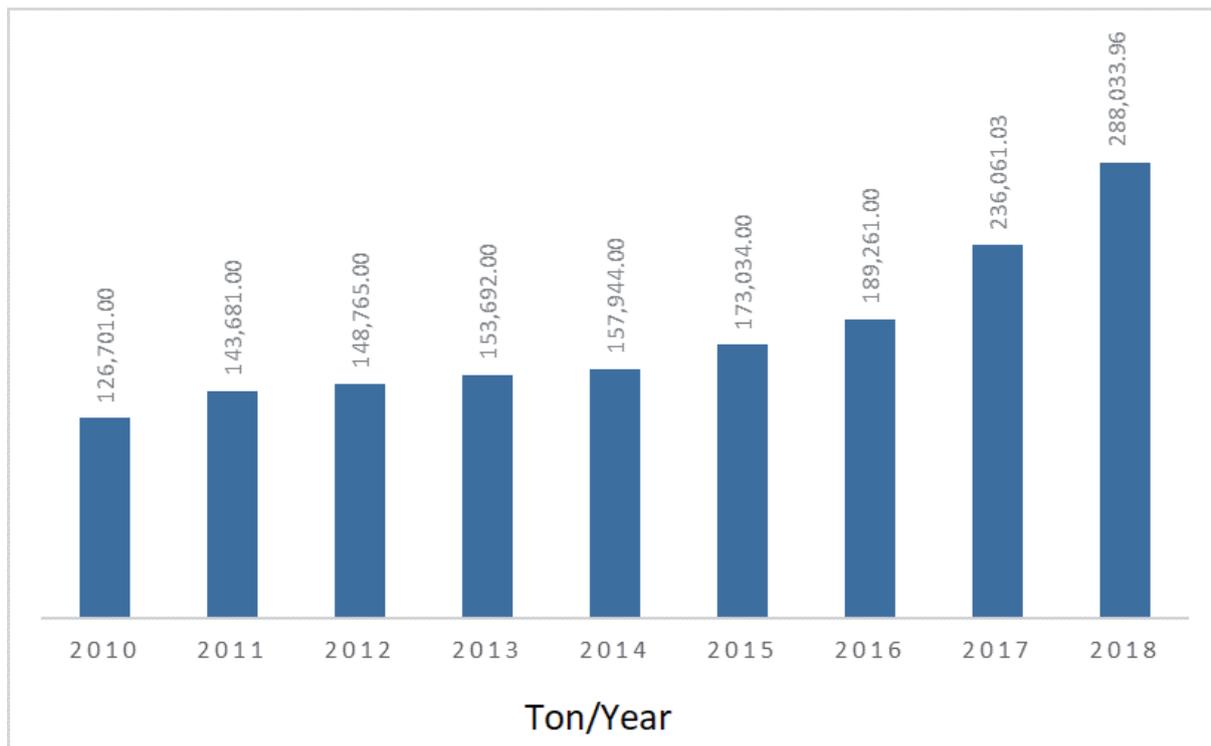
The conservation of the marine environment carried out by Panglima Laot, in turn, impacts sustainable marine-based economic development in Aceh (Abdullah, 2012). This condition is possible because environmental damage is a significant factor that causes poverty (see Duraiappah, 1998), while Panglima Laot tries to mitigate damage to the marine environment in order to maintain the availability of fish for sustainable extraction. The preservation of the marine environment here means being a prerequisite for community welfare and sustainable economic growth as articulated by the blue economy concept (Patil et al., 2016).

Accordingly, the study conducted by Rudi et al. (2008) proved that *Adat Laot*, which functions in fishing regulations, has positively impacted the Acehnese people. The northern part of Aceh's marine area, which is protected and managed by Panglima Laot with its *Adat Laot*, has a greater diversity of fish species and an abundance of fish than the open sea area. This fact is undoubtedly a tremendous economic potential for the people of Aceh. Moreover, according to

Rahmah et al. (2021), when viewed from the Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries Management (EAFM), which emphasises environmental sustainability and social welfare in modern fisheries management systems, Panglima Laot has succeeded in implementing this system in the good category. Therefore, it is not surprising that Aceh has experienced a significant increase from year to year in terms of capture fisheries production. Chart 1 shows the increase in capture fisheries production in Aceh from 2010 to 2018.

From the data above, it can be seen that capture fisheries production in Aceh always increases every year. In fact, compared to capture fisheries production in 2010, the amount of capture fisheries production in 2018 was double from the former. This large fishery production in Aceh is used to meet people's consumption needs, raw materials for the regional processed fish industry, and export commodities. In 2016, the need for fish consumption by the people of Aceh per capita was 49.8 kg/year, with a growth of 6.3% from the previous year. This value is far above the average national per capita fish consumption requirement, which is only 43.88 kg/year, with a growth of 6.74% (Isfani et al., 2020).

From the perspective of DKP, whose tasks in conserving and rehabilitating marine resources, supervising marine and aquatic resources, and empowering coastal communities, Panglima Laot is a strategic partner for this agency. Panglima Laot is a form of a social institution born organically and can effectively carry out customary law of the sea. In fact, because of the strong traditional values held by Panglima Laot, it can be said that the effectiveness and efficiency of the DKP's performances are highly dependent on the performance of Panglima Laot. So it is not surprising that the DKP itself often holds public hearings with Panglima Laot as a representative of civil society in determining certain policies, including in Aceh's maritime spatial zoning. In audience forums conducted by the government, Panglima Laot always voices the importance of policies that improve the welfare of fishermen and become solutions to marine environmental problems in Aceh (Mustaqim et al., 2020).



Source: Indonesian Ministry of Marine and Fisheries (2021)

Chart 1. Capture Fisheries Production in Aceh (2010-2018)

## Human Security

Aceh Province is experiencing many maritime problems, including people smuggling. One of the causes of this smuggling problem is that Aceh has become a destination for immigrants from various countries, especially the Rohingya from Myanmar. The latest data released by the United Nations High Commission for Refugees in Aceh stated that the number of Rohingya refugees was 103 on January 8, 2021. In contrast, in September 2020, the number was almost 400 (Rahmad, 2021). The data relating to the number of refugees is constantly changing, considering that many refugees leave Aceh and are carried out in a short time. This phenomenon happens because Aceh Province only functions as a transit point for illegal immigrants to continue their journey to other countries (Rachmawati, 2021).

Many immigrants from the Middle East as well as Rohingya are trying to go to Malaysia, Singapore, or even Australia, and only use Indonesia, including Aceh, as a transit point to enter the following country (Kadarudin et al., 2018; Missbach, 2017). In fact, to enter and leave Indonesia to go to the following country, there

is a smuggling business of immigrants carried out by local Acehnese and foreigners. These elements facilitated the journey of immigrants to their destination countries and made Aceh a temporary transit. In the smuggling process, illegal immigrants will pass through the sea and “secret passages,” which are very difficult to identify from the police, the institution responsible for this problem. These “secret passages” can alternate and even pass through places the police do not expect.<sup>1</sup>

Given this complexity, the Aceh Regional Police decided to collaborate with the coastal communities in Aceh, including Panglima Laot, to monitor their own area. Panglima Laot can provide accurate information to the police for further action. In the process of people smuggling, syndicates that provide smuggling services will use ships and pass through the Aceh sea. In fact, “the sea is like air... it is difficult to control optimally” and requires enormous resources. Meanwhile, the Aceh Regional Police only has

<sup>1</sup> Interview with Sony Sonjaya, Directorate of General of Criminal Investigation of the Aceh Police, March 25, 2021

ten ships to carry out security operations which he judged to be “very insufficient.” Therefore, the police appointed Panglima Laot, who is a fisherman and sails every day, to always provide information regarding all forms of lawlessness at sea, including people smuggling. “The existence of Panglima Laot is a distinct advantage for Aceh...and we are partners”, as stated by Police Commissioner Sony Sonjaya in an interview regarding the cooperative relationship between the police and Panglima Laot. The cooperation that was built between these two institutions went well. In October 2020, for example, Panglima Laot received reports of Rohingya ships entering the sea areas of East Aceh and North Aceh and further reported it to the police. This information is undoubtedly beneficial for the police considering that people smuggling cases in Aceh are pretty common. However, it should be underlined that Panglima Laot here does not necessarily act to reject the arrival of immigrants to Aceh. Panglima Laot sometimes takes the initiative to rescue immigrants who were dangerously adrift at sea and threatened with death (Surry, 2020). In cooperation with the Aceh Regional Police, Panglima Laot works to eradicate immigrant smuggling, which is detrimental and very possible for human rights violations.

While Aceh has serious people smuggling problems, this province is also experiencing severe drug abuse problems, threatening the Acehese people’s human security. The survey results by the National Narcotics Agency (BNN) and the Indonesian Institute of Sciences (LIPI) in 2019 showed that Aceh Province was ranked sixth nationally in terms of narcotics abuse, with a percentage of 2.80% and a total of 82,415 users. In Aceh Province, drugs users are generally between 11 and 40 years old (Agus, 2020).

The process of drugs smuggling entering into and exiting Aceh often uses the sea route. In that process, dealers frequently take advantage of coastal fishermen in transactions missed by law enforcement because they “understand the sea terrain,” which is difficult to trace by the police. Not only using the services of fishermen, but sometimes drug smugglers also purposely steal fishermen’s boats to conduct transactions at sea.

Therefore, the police and BNN have partnered with Panglima Laot because Panglima Laot acts as a leader and coordinator for fishermen in Aceh (Hartanto et al., 2021). This drug eradication cooperation has been quite effective. In January 2021, for example, Acehese fishermen uncovered the smuggling of 300 kilograms of methamphetamine in the waters of Bireun and then reported it to the police (Wakik, 2021).

From the explanation above, it can be seen that Panglima Laot has a high significance in the eyes of law enforcement. In creating maritime security, especially human security, Panglima Laot assists with the complex role of the police in solving the problems of people smuggling and drugs. The closeness and legitimacy of the community, deep-rooted customary law, and the reach of his profession that allows Panglima Laot to carry out daily marine surveillance make Panglima Laot have strong bargaining power in carrying out its functions. By considering its role, from the perspective of Bueger’s maritime security concept (2015), Panglima Laot can resolve the issue of human security, which was also discussed regarding the issue of people smuggling and drugs.

### National Security

With the characteristics of an area dominated by the ocean, wide coastline, and consisting of a group of islands, Indonesia has a potential security threat in the form of border violations (Laksana, 2011). This is also what is happening in the waters of Aceh: border violations committed by foreign countries are lurking. The geographical area of Aceh, which the Indian Ocean surrounds in the west and the Malacca Strait in the east, makes it directly adjacent to several countries in the region, such as India, Thailand, and Malaysia. Not only that, the existence of a busy trade route that passes through the two oceans above makes Aceh a vulnerable area for violations of sovereignty.

In the implementation of Indonesian defence, Law Number 3 of 2002 concerning National Defence states that the military element is the Main Component (*Komponen Utama*) while the civilian element is the Supporting Component

(*Komponen Pendukung*). Both have an essential function in implementing a universal defence system (*Sistem Pertahanan Rakyat Semesta*) and have their respective roles (Mustari et al., 2018). The Main Component is tasked with tackling or dealing with military threats, and the Supporting Components then assist this. In the implementation of defence in Aceh, especially in sea defence, the Indonesian Navy Base of Sabang City (LANAL) is the main component of the function. Panglima Laot assisted the LANAL as a civil society representative during its operation. Panglima Laot here means to perform the function of Supporting Components.

LANAL implements several strategies in carrying out its role as the Main Component of national defence. One of the strategies is implementing routine and scheduled marine security patrols throughout the LANAL working area and implementing Maritime Potential Development (BINPOTMAR) for coastal communities. In conducting BINPOTMAR, LANAL seeks to get optimal support from coastal communities, one of which is by collaborating with Panglima Laot, who is part of the Supporting Component. LANAL gave education and understanding to the fishermen about how to detect the threats at sea, such as the illegal activities of foreign ships entering Indonesia's water which could harm national integrity. With the profession as a fisherman who has a busy fishing schedule and many members and is well-coordinated, Panglima Laot always "provides information" and warnings if there are challenging situations in the form of threats or threats or dangers to water safety to the LANAL.<sup>2</sup>

In the effort to secure Aceh's seas, Panglima Laot's position is crucial because they are reliable and trustworthy informants. Panglima Laot can provide actual information related to maritime security in Aceh. For example, in January 2020, Panglima Laot reported the presence of an Iranian-flagged ship to LANAL via telephone. The ship is about 14 miles from Meulaboh Beach and carries 14 crew members. With the speed of information

flow like this, the existing sovereignty threat can be swiftly followed up by LANAL.

In the excellent cooperation between the military and Panglima Laot, it can be seen that Panglima Laot is a civilian representative who works effectively as a Supporting Component. The military very much needs Panglima Laot because they can provide information and warnings quickly, considering their daily activities at sea. In the end, this was able to help the LANAL carry out its function as the Main Component of national defence, especially in the maritime context. The interaction between the LANAL and Panglima Laot can be interpreted as a synergy between the military and civilian sectors, allowing greater effectiveness and efficiency in implementing national security (Jayasundara-Smits, 2016). Furthermore, Panglima Laot's role in assisting LANAL is significant in realising maritime security because it contributes to the national security of the Bueger (2015) maritime security matrix.

## CONCLUSION

Panglima Laot is an invaluable legacy from the spice route, and this cultural institution remains astonishingly relevant until the present era. Since Aceh became the spice route, which was the centre of business interactions for local and international traders, Panglima Laot had several crucial roles, such as export-import facilitator, taxes and duties collector, as well as the guardian of the coastal area. In the contemporary era, Panglima Laot has succeeded in having a crucial impact on Aceh's society, including in the maritime security realm.

In fact, Panglima Laot effectively works the four components of Bueger's maritime security matrix (2015): marine environment, economic development, human security, and national security. For example, in the context of the marine environment and economic development, Panglima Laot and the Department of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries of Aceh Province carried out various joint activities to realise the two dimensions above. In implementing its policies, such as conserving the marine environment to arresting IUU fishing actors, the Department of Marine Affairs and Fisheries cooperates

<sup>2</sup> Interview with the Commander of LANAL, Colonel Navy Ardhi Sunaryo, March 24, 2021.

with Panglima Laot because this affects the effectiveness of the policy. In fact, with the existence of *Adat Laot* law, Panglima Laot has its own legal mechanism to provide sanctions for perpetrators of violations.

In realising human security with existing stakeholders, Panglima Laot plays a vital role because they work as partners and have essential duties as informants. Panglima Laot provides crucial information related to crimes that often pass through the sea, such as human trafficking and drug smuggling. Because Panglima Laot's social base is fishermen who go to sea on a daily basis, they can conduct thorough and detailed monitoring. They are able to identify "secret passages" which are hardly detected by the local police in charge of law enforcement.

Moreover, Panglima Laot, with structured coordination, assists and ensures national security and communicates well with the Indonesian Navy. Panglima Laot was given a basic understanding of the forms of defence threats, such as identifying foreign ships entering the Indonesian marine zone and then reporting them to the LANAL, an extension of the Indonesian Navy in Aceh. The collaboration between LANAL and Panglima Laot could be seen as the harmonious relation between military and civilian that is positive in implementing national security.

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